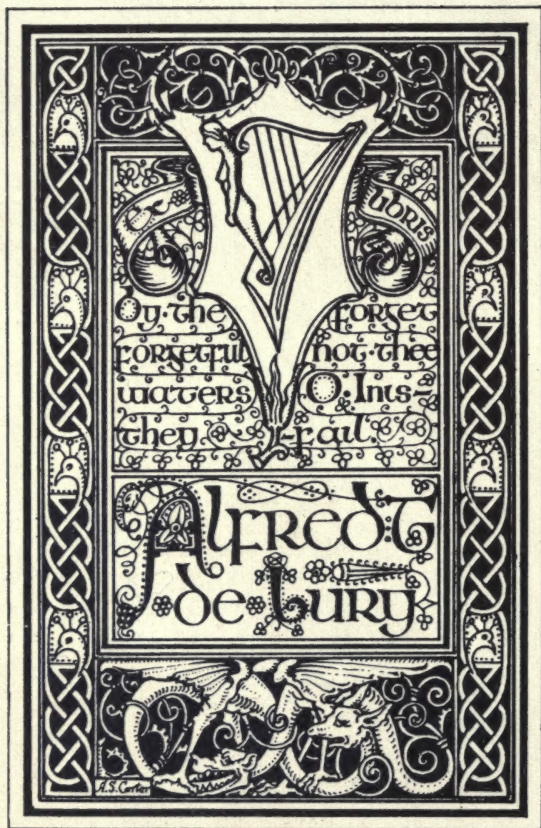


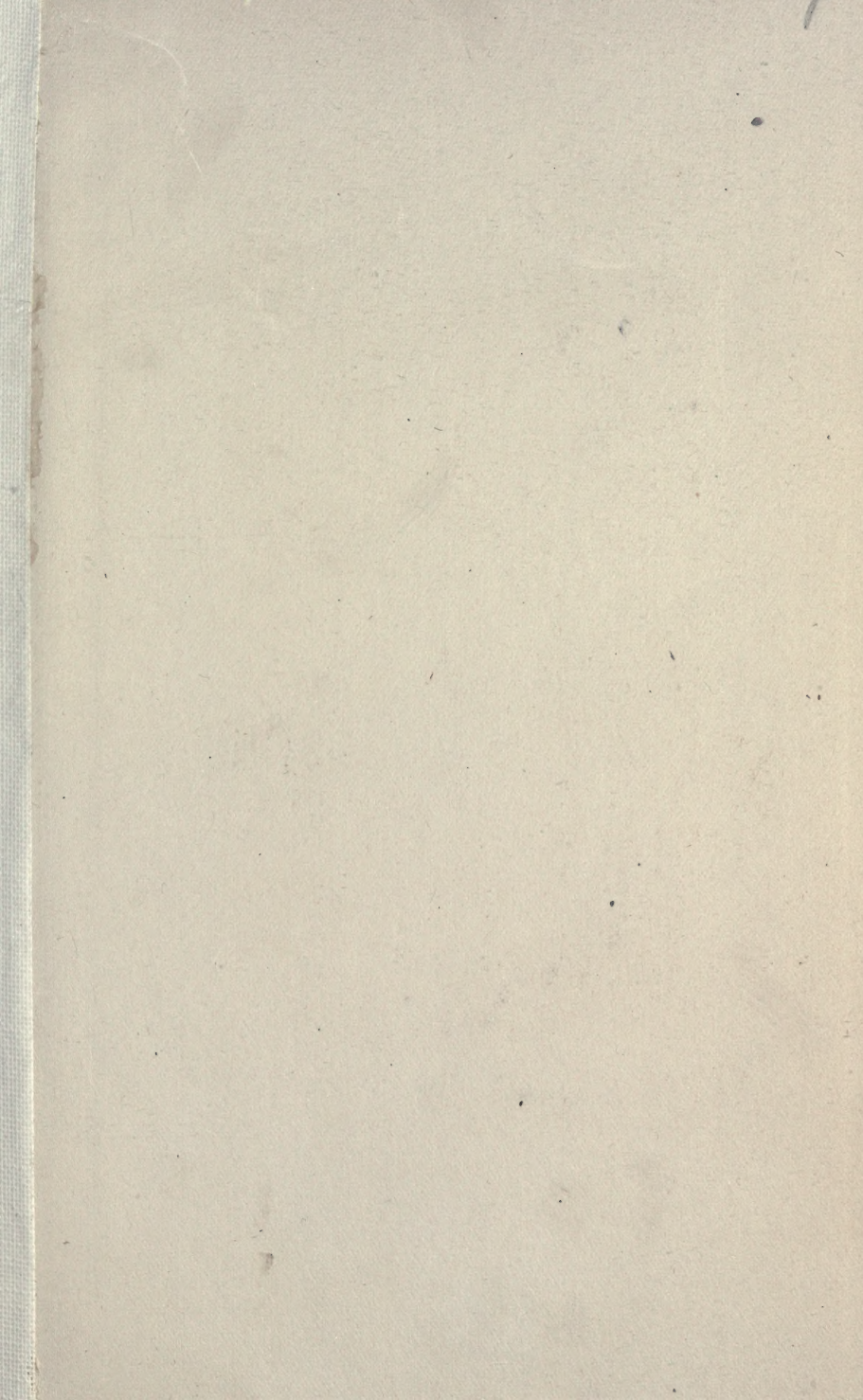


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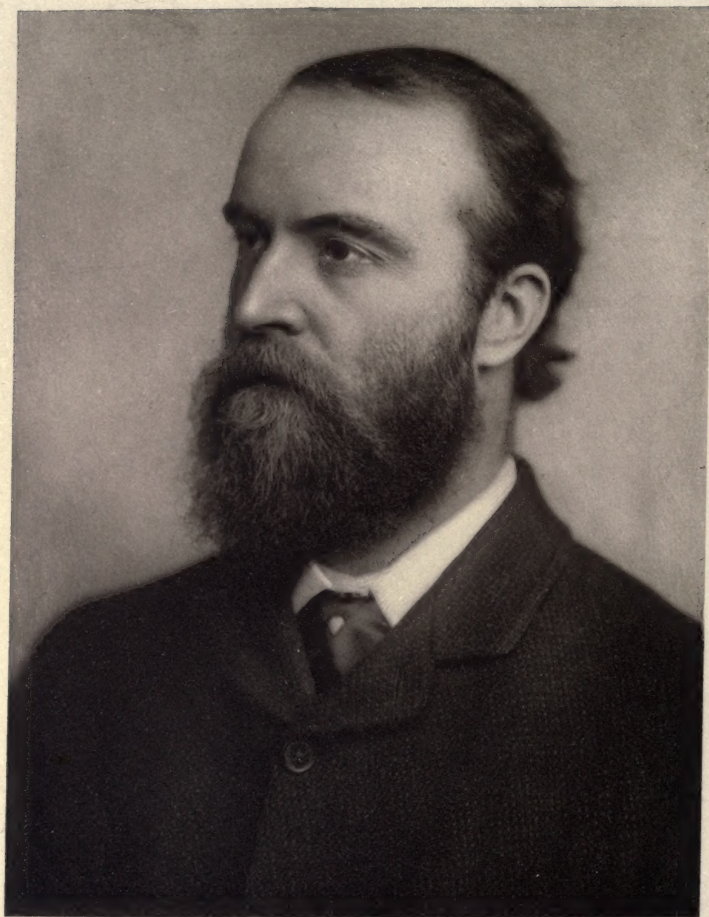


# RECOLLECTIONS









*Lawrence, Dublin Photo.*

*Emery Walker, Ph.D.*

*Chas. S. Parnell*



# Recollections

BY

WILLIAM O'BRIEN, M.P.

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TO  
THE MOTHER OF MY WIFE  
WITH  
AFFECTION AND GRATITUDE





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## CHAPTER I

### MY FATHER AND MOTHER

I WAS born in Mallow on October 2nd, 1852. I first ascertained the fact from an entry on the fly-leaf of Connellan's edition of the *Four Masters*, on which the dates of my parents' marriage and of the births of their six children, with the names of their several god-parents—or "gossips," as they were then called—were recorded in my father's handwriting. It is possible that my future life was in some degree influenced by finding our little family history thus early linked with these sorrowful national chronicles.

My small head ached in the endeavour to follow the dry catalogues of deaths (mostly violent ones) and predatory expeditions of which the Annals for several centuries chiefly consisted. It was consoling to arrive at the great events of the Thirty Years' War against Elizabeth. The hard names and merciless details of slaughter in the text were enlivened by voluminous notes on the overthrow of Bagenal and all the other heroic deeds on the banks of the

Ulster Blackwater, which I was afterwards destined to visit for the first time as Member of Parliament for the historic section of country over which O'Neill had waged his stubborn wars. I am afraid I generally rose from my readings with a higher opinion of the annotator than of the *Four Masters*.

My father was in general repute as one of the wisest of advisers. He was the managing clerk of one of those grandiose provincial attorneys who, in the old Chancery days, carried on vast family lawsuits from generation to generation, and had the carriage of sale of extensive estates in the Incumbered Estates Court. His principal was a florid-faced, majestic old gentleman whom I remember blinking wisely from behind his gold spectacles in the direction of my father (who sat at the opposite side of the escritoire), with a quill-pen in his trembling hand, grandly affixing his signature to some great skin of parchment. He somehow left the impression that affixing his signature was his special function in life. He was one of the kindest of men. In the summer evenings our entire household would walk out to his country residence of Farmleigh, on the Cork Road, where the children of the two families would race their respective donkeys in the fields, while the fathers sat under an elm tree over their grog, discoursing the contents of the skins of parchment, and the mothers were exchanging their family confidences and household receipts, or making ready the



tea and bread-and-jam with which the festivities concluded.

My father also spent his evenings largely with a bank manager in the town, a gentle and somewhat ineffectual man, whose chief adviser in all his banking transactions I strongly suspect him to have been. But of this, or of any other his professional secrets, we children could never gather a hint. In business matters he was as reserved as the grave. It was perhaps one of the reasons why his advice was sought with an unfailing confidence on all sorts of legal, financial, and domestic troubles. Respect for his judgment and integrity of character made him a considerable power in the community. Socially, he had the gift of making many fast friends. From the profusion of bright-coloured satin and velvet waistcoats preserved in his wardrobe, after they had been for many years out of fashion, I infer that in his younger days he had been something of a beau. We only knew him in his quiet backgammon days, when music was the predominant passion of his leisure hours, what time he was not out in his shirt sleeves cultivating his garden. He was an adept at most musical instruments, including the flute, the fiddle, the violoncello, the clarionet, and the cor-nopean, and had quite a little library of music folios in which, in his own neat hand, he had set forth the notation suitable for each. But the flute was his grand passion. He had half-a-dozen instruments of varying size, encrusted with all sorts of elaborate

keys. When he sat playing in our parlour, with his chair tipped against the window-shutters, a crowd would sometimes gather in the street to listen. With his children he was always appreciative, but, in a quiet way, authoritative. I do not recollect his ever administering any corporal punishment to any of us, but none the less—perhaps all the more—we stood in dread of his slightest frown of disapproval.

Of my mother I almost fear to write at all. The truth, in the barest words I can express it in, must seem extravagant in the eyes of strangers. When I came back to Mallow, after a long absence, an unknown youth, to contest a seat in Parliament with Her Majesty's Solicitor-General, the reply of many an old elector, especially if he were of the old kindly Mallow Protestant breed, was, "I don't know much about you and I don't like your politics, but I can't refuse a vote to Kate Nagle's son." She came of a stock which was rooted in Mallow probably even longer than the "Big Tree,"<sup>1</sup> whose colossal girth still decorates the causeway of Mallow Bridge. How far or near may have been our connection with the aristocratic Nagle family of Annakissy, who gave their name to the mountains that stretch across the Nagle country, and among whose glorious offshoots are numbered James the Second's Irish Chancellor, and Nano Nagle, the famous foundress of the Irish Ursulines, and the still more famous Edmund Burke

<sup>1</sup> Alas ! since these lines were written the "Big Tree" has followed the innumerable Mallow Nagles into the dead past.

—the connection was always taken for granted in family gossip—I have never been at the pains to inquire. What is certain is that my grandfather, James Nagle, was one of those thriving, jovial, and big-hearted merchants who made considerable fortunes in Ireland during the high prices of the Napoleonic Wars, and lost them in the years of depression that followed. He and his brother Pat—of whom history only records that he was a big man who broke an iron bar across his knee to show some English officer what an Irishman was capable of—seem to have been among the principal local potentates of the day, the Barrys being their most considerable rivals and friends. “The Nagles for bacon and the Barrys for beef,” used to be one of the current Mallow proverbs of my young days.

Unhappily, my curiosity in matters of family table-talk never arose, so far as it has arisen at all, until those who could have given more consistency to my vague recollections had passed away. One thing seems to stand out clearly in the business record of James Nagle—that smuggling formed a large and honourable department of his operations. I have often heard the old people tell how an honest and hilarious old soul in the Excise, long remembered as “Barry the Gauger,” used to be found quaffing toasts and singing “Auld Lang Syne” upstairs in my grandfather’s dining-room, while puncheons of whiskey in car-loads were being smuggled into the stores below by some com-



plaisant system of duty-free "permits." Whose conscience, indeed, in those days, would have been more troubled than Barry the Gauger's at cheating England in her impudent attempt to levy off Irish whiskey the expense of beating "Boney"? It is one of the regrets of my life that I failed to learn, before his contemporaries disappeared, a little more about that characteristic figure of "Barry the Gauger" and the stirring "Auld Lang Syne" to which he drank. But I have heard enough to be able to construct for myself a pretty vivid picture of the reckless, cheery, hard-drinking, dare-devil "Rakes of Mallow," among whom my grandfather appears to have been a considerable personage. The "Rakes" seem to have hired a club-house called "Radical Cottage," at some distance from the town, in which they carried on their Homeric orgies for whole days together, probably with a view to escaping the jurisdiction of their wives. Whence the designation "Radical Cottage" I could never ascertain, for the reputation of the "Rakes of Mallow" has come down to us with a less powerful whiff of politics than of the punch-bowl.

Massive as was James Nagle's frame, and well-seasoned as was his head, the insurance company with whom his life was insured seem to have been prosaic enough to suspect that the potations of Radical Cottage had something to say to his premature demise, for they refused payment of the policy.

The last famous rally of the Rakes was on the

occasion of their expedition to the Cork Assizes as witnesses to testify to the soundness of their old comrade's head and the shabbiness of the close-fisted insurance company. They travelled together on the roof of "The Rakes of Mallow Coach"—a mail-coach as renowned on the southern road in those days as "The Angel" was in Islington—and unshrinkingly gave testimony of the faith that was in them. It was long told how Bill W——, one of the most celebrated of the set, whose rolling figure, droll eye, and watery lip gave an excellent picture of what the board of Radical Cottage must have looked like in the festive hour, captured the hearts of judge and jury with the *obiter dictum*:

Whiskey mix'd with Mallow Spa  
Is the grandest drink you ever saw.

With the aid of such testimony, an unimaginative insurance company naturally met the fate their meanness deserved at the hands of a Cork jury. A generation afterwards, when the last of the Rakes of Mallow had long passed away to meet the verdict of a higher and, let us hope, no less indulgent tribunal, I heard Isaac Butt, who was then the Irish leader, relating in the editor's room of the *Freeman's Journal* the familiar story of the Cork trial, in which he had been engaged as counsel, and of Bill W——'s historic couplet. Great was his amazement to find in my pallid and degenerate self a descendant of his clients of those distant days.

In my own day all that remained of the departed glories of the Nagles and the Mansfields (my maternal grandparents) were certain colossal old dining-tables of black mahogany, a pianoforte of ancient and coffin-like proportions, under whose unsteady legs we loved to risk our youthful lives, a tea service of delicately painted china, which was only brought out for Christmas holiday feasts, and was consequently always associated in my mind with currant-cake and a monster Christmas candle, together with rare cut-glass decanters and "rummers," some cracked and some stemless, which had doubtless clinked and sparkled on many an Attic night in Radical Cottage. In the prosperous days of the family my mother had been brought up at the Misses Babington's Young Ladies' Academy. Mallow had been for centuries the favoured residence of a considerable aristocratic and Protestant community, who, in the Elizabethan days, congregated there as the seat of government of Munster, and in more modern times came there to drink the Spa waters and to hunt the foxes of the Duhallow country.

In the Misses Babington's polite establishment the girls, gentle and simple, Protestant and Catholic, seem to have mingled together with an amenity which, I am afraid, is wanting in the more recent relations of classes and creeds in Ireland, and which served, to a surprising degree, to mitigate the brutality of the strict letter of the law in pre-



emancipation days. Quite half the families with whom my earliest recollections of small dances and games of forfeits are associated belonged to one or other of the half-dozen Protestant sects which had their conventicles in Mallow,—to which of them, or for what reasons, it never struck us to inquire, no more than it struck the occupants of the old graveyard, where Protestant and Catholic reposed side by side. The two touchstones of character in the Mallow of old were : first, “he was a good neighbour” ; and second, “he was of the old stock.”

If my mother owed any portion of her accomplishments as a housewife to the Misses Babington, as well as her attainments in polite letters, these estimable ladies would have little to learn from the more pretentious modern training-grounds of the New Woman. Making full allowance for childish illusions, there can be no manner of doubt that she possessed a genius for the production of an infinite number of uncommon household dainties such as in later years I have found nowhere except perhaps in some of the choice old inns of provincial France. Under her hands the seasoning of a white pudding had something of the aroma of the thymy plots of Paradise, and a dish of tripe soured in new milk became a supper for the gods. She had the enthusiasm, and perhaps some trace of the sadness, of the poet who has never dreamt of making a rhyme. She was one of the girls who decorated the banquetting room in which O’Connell delivered his famous

"Mallow Defiance," the night of the Mallow Monster Meeting of "the Repeal Year," and was one of those admitted to the gallery during the speeches. How often I have seen her soft brown eyes light up in all their depths as she repeated the Liberator's historic apostrophe, "I'm not that slave!" in which all who were listening to him seemed to hear with frantic joy the summons to the battlefield to millions of men. She was young, however, and it was Young Ireland, rather than Old Ireland, to which her heart went out. Thomas Francis Meagher seems to have visited Mallow some years afterwards, in all the glory of a young Harmodius skilled to wreath his sword with rosy eloquence. I think, when my mother talked these things over with the mothers of families who were her girl-friends of those days, their eyes brightened more at the recollection of the young Swordsman than of the old Liberator. Alas! those who saw O'Connell swallow his "Mallow Defiance" a few Sundays afterwards at the proclaimed meeting in Clontarf, lived to see Meagher's sword prove equally ineffectual. For the later school of Irish patriotism they were both right in their day and in their circumstances. O'Connell was right in trying his "Mallow Defiance" upon Peel, and equally right and brave in not attempting to make good his threat. "Meagher of the Sword," in his turn, was at no loss for stout hearts to take up arms, but for arms to take up.

It was in the midst of the insurrectionary tumults

of '48 that my eldest brother, James Nagle O'Brien, was born. My father, as we often taunted him when his blood had come to run less hotly, was one of the ardent spirits of the local club of the Confederates. Upon the day a son was born to him, the local officer of police met him and told him he had a warrant to search the house for arms. "But," he added, with a chivalry which is a lost art with the Irish police-officer of more recent date, "I have just heard of Mrs. O'Brien's illness, and if you will give me your word there are no arms concealed in the house, I will not disturb her." Many a year afterwards, this officer, Mr. J. Sheridan Macleod, and myself chanced to meet pretty often as friendly adversaries. He had become a Resident Magistrate, and during the Balfour Coercion campaigns was frequently in charge of the forces of military and police assembled to suppress or arrest me. He sometimes reminded me, in a laughing way, of the good turn he once did the previous generation of our rebellious house, and was under the impression that it was I myself who was born under the insurrectionary star of '48. One day, in Kilkenny, after a scene of desperate conflict between police and people, in which he and I bore a not inconsiderable part, he cried out to me, wiping his perspiring brow: "It seems as if I were never to be done with rebel O'Briens, from your cradle to my grave." Mr. Macleod has indeed gone to the grave of a gallant gentleman, while the sounds of the old, unending battle still fill the air.



The "old neighbours" of the Mallow of the Forties (their ranks are now thin) still speak of "handsome Kate Nagle." The only young impression on the subject that remains on my memory is that once when I saw her in evening dress, setting out for some charity bazaar or ball, I had an uneasy apprehension that I saw her in spirit-form, and that the mother of real life was taking wings to herself to depart for heaven. It was a great relief to find her moving about the house next day as usual. My more mature recollections are of a large and noble figure; of a forehead high and delicately arched; of the large but well-shaped "nose of the Nagles"; of a pair of eloquent dark eyes, which were bottomless wells of tenderness, and, in reposeful hours, of melancholy; and all set in a smooth framework of thick dark hair, thickest where it gathered in a wide curve or band about the ears. The years when I was most observant were years when sorrow had done much to rub out the girlish animation and mirthfulness of the Forties; but to the last hours of the agonising disease of which she died, when all her children were gone except one who was in prison, her sympathetic charm, her wistful tenderness, her heroic courage and even sprightly humour in moments of sorrow and pain never deserted her. By the voluntarily-tendered kindness of Mr. W. E. Forster, the Chief Secretary, I was allowed to leave Kilmainham Prison from time to time to visit her in her last illness. One of the curious sights of

Dublin in its day was to see the Governor of the prison, Captain Dennehy, and myself driving amicably together through the streets on a jaunting-car to the Hospice where she lay dying, and where the Governor and the jaunting-car again picked me up after the allotted couple of hours. I was finally released from prison on the morning on which my mother also received her final and happier release. The good news was a viaticum which brought into her eyes a first ray of heaven. The Sisters of Charity, who had come to love her with the filial affection of the children she had lost—an affection that was none the less human for being also divine—were as enthusiastic in their admiration for the worn, waxen face, and the deep eyes lighted up with the last glow of fondness and joy that morning, as could be the most ardent of “the old neighbours” at thought of the “handsome Kate Nagle” of the days when Young Ireland was really young.

## CHAPTER II

### MY FIRST RECOLLECTIONS

By a curious paradox, the first thing I can recollect in life is—death. It was the death of a sister, a year older than myself—a fair-haired little creature, with her father's grey-blue eyes, as I judge from a miniature painted by an artist who was at the time lodging in our house. All that I remember at first hand of the child, or of the death, was the tramp of heavy boots on the stairs, and a certain smell of coffin-wood, which made me feel as if it were not so pleasant an affair as I was told to be carried away to heaven.

My next recollection—perhaps, for good reason, not so vivid—is of a mishap which occurred as I was swinging on the high iron gate opening into the garden (*aetat.* probably four or five). The gate was badly hung and slipped from its socket, and that is all—except a cicatrice at the top of the forehead, the deep scar of which has lasted me through life, with its attendant headaches.

But the third great event which stands out from the haze of infancy remains before my mind as



accurately in every particular as if it had only occurred yesterday. It was on the occasion of a "barring-out" at the National School, which was then held on the first floor of the Long Room, in the Spa Walk. The Long Room, in the days of its pride, was the casino or assembly-room where the Grattans and Ned Lysaghts proffered snuff-boxes and sat at the card-tables and danced minuets in the evenings, after drinking the waters and exchanging gentle scandal with the wits and beauties at the Pump-Room in the Spa Glen during the day.

The schoolmaster was a man of remarkable capacity, an upright, ecclesiastically-minded man, who, had he found the right groove, would have made a Bishop of commanding ability and dignity, but, having slipped into the wrong one, sank into a disappointed and irascible pedagogue, at war with his parish priest, and regarded by his pupils pretty much as Attila must have been regarded by his defenceless victims on the plains of Lombardy. A heavy box bludgeon, delicately called "the slapper," was his principal instrument of government. We used to say his temper particularly suffered from the meagre fare on fast days. I can still see the blazing face with which he returned to the chattering school after one of these Barmecide repasts, and, waving "the slapper" about his head, rushed through the midst of the affrighted urchins, from top to bottom of the room, dispensing summary justice, or rather injustice, on the little shins and shoulders that

strewn his path. It was the recognised pedagogic jurisprudence of that day, as the rack and the Spanish Maiden were a couple of centuries earlier.

Rebellion, however, sometimes fronted Attila to his teeth. There was an annual struggle between master and pupils for a Christmas vacation of very much the same character as Polignac's tussle with the Gavroches of Paris on the barricades. The "big boys" were beginning to realise dimly that boys, big and little, were made for something more exhilarating than strokes of "the slapper" at Christmas-tide; and the poor master, for his part, whose revenues were not in proportion to the size of his family, not unnaturally remembered that the vacation, which might be excellent fun for the boys, meant three weeks' stoppage of supplies to his own famished exchequer.

One of these first uprisings against the tyranny of the Long Room Bastille had a long-lived renown among the schoolboys of Mallow. It occurred subsequently to my own small adventure, and I was myself a mere looker-on—I suspect, an excessively frightened one. While the master was at dinner, desks and forms were piled against the door, and shouts of "Vacation" answered him rebelliously back when he demanded admittance. His threats and all the force of his shoulders were of no avail. The lads stood their ground behind the barriers, my elder brother, Jim, being a ringleader in piling up fresh obstacles. It was not until a blacksmith who lived

a few doors off had been brought on the scene and, with all the force of his sledge-hammer, smashed in the door, that the master was at last able to rush in, terrible as an angry god, over the ruins of the barricades. With uplifted club, he made for my brother, whose voice, I daresay, he had heard urging on the fray. One of the lofty windows of the old assembly room was wide open. My brother dived towards it, and for a moment stood irresolute on the threshold — then, all of a sudden, disappeared into space. There was a cry of horror; the master stood paralysed, white as death. Then somebody near the window looked out into the gulf below, and gave a shout of joy. My brother had jumped to the top of a load of hay, which was passing at the moment, and was jogging along around the corner, safe in his comfortable elevation.

My own little affair was of a less heroic character. The elder boys put me up, in my tiny frock and drawers, to demand vacation. Doubtless their calculation was that my ridiculous smallness and rather larger school-fee would protect me from the consequences that would have overtaken themselves. They were obliged to hoist me on a desk in order to make me visible. From that awkward eminence I cried out "Vacation! Vacation!" It was the first speech of my life, and it made its sensation. "Vacation! Vacation!" shouted the whole school. The master, who was writing at his rostrum, bounded to his feet, lightning in his eyes, and the box-wood



club in his hand. "Who was it that spoke?" he cried, not at once perceiving his diminutive enemy on the top of the desk. Under his eyes the boys were as silent as the waves under the frown of Neptune. Not having, probably, the smallest perception of the danger, my own small treble voice piped calmly away: "Vacation! Vacation!" The master's eye had now fixed me, and a shudder went through the school as he brandished the box-wood club, as if to take aim. Suddenly, at sight of the small rebel in bib and drawers, he burst into a fit of laughter, and whether he yielded to the petition for the holidays or no, all I remember for certain is that the master was, on that day, in a boisterous good-humour, the like of which schoolboy memory never found a parallel for before.

I had not seen the master for some twenty years when I one day returned to solicit his vote as an elector of Mallow for his little rebel pupil of old. The poor man had grown pitifully shrunken and old, with many children and few pupils, and almost as few scattered hairs, but his dignity, his proud consciousness of capacities that had never found their fitting function in life, were as striking as ever. We laughed over the old memories of the Long Room, without any malice on either side; and, truth to tell, I never felt, in the honour of being a Member of the House of Commons, a spark of my pride in the honour of being sent there by men like my old schoolmaster, in days when votes in a small borough

were worth at the least £30 apiece, and when £30 might well have called up golden visions to the imagination of the disappointed old pedagogue in his deserted schoolroom.

My first memory of one of the foremost Irishmen of our generation — Dr. Croke, afterwards Archbishop of Cashel — dates from these shadowy days. He was at the time a curate in Mallow, and, owing to a cousinship on my mother's side, was an intimate family friend. He was a strange compound of schoolboy drollery and of sternness in essentials. Two of my first impressions remain. One is of a sermon on Immortality, with a refrain of "Far, far beyond the grave" running through it — as to which I can still see the dark figure and hear the dread words in which he, so to say, drew aside the curtain beyond which endless worlds of pain and joy revealed themselves. "My dear man," said the Archbishop, one Christmas night when I was going back upon the sermon at his hospitable fire in Thurles — "my dear man" (with one of his roguish smiles) "that sermon lasted me all the way to New Zealand and back, for fifteen years of my life." The other incident was of his playing marbles with me once on my way to school, with results that made me turn upon him indignantly with the cry, "You're a cheat!" "That's what people have been saying of me all my life, because I beat them," was the Archbishop's comment, in one of our fireside gossips. "But," with one of those unexpressed laughs that

diffused a ruddy glow over his rugged face and lighted up his blue eyes with fun, "I daresay you were right on that occasion, William."

People who did not know him, and even some who ought to have known him better, sometimes so far misunderstood his love of a joke and contempt for cant as to suspect of insincerity and cunning one of the softest-hearted of men, and one of the most scrupulous of Churchmen. His character was not inaptly hit off in an anecdote I have heard him relate of himself with a relish. When Dr. Croke was nominated Archbishop of Cashel by Rome, in the teeth of the votes of the Tipperary priests, and to their bitter disappointment (the feeling ran so high that it used to be said the new Archbishop had better come to Tipperary with a coat of mail, like a landlord, at a time when landlords sometimes found a shirt of mail a useful article of wardrobe in Tipperary), a priest of the Archdiocese asked a priest from the diocese of Cloyne (from which Dr. Croke came): "What sort of a man is this you're sending down upon us from Cloyne?" "Well then," was the reply of the Cork priest, "one of the queerest fellows you ever laid your eyes upon. He'll play pitch-and-toss with you in the morning, and suspend you in the evening, if you deserve it." Certain it is that if ever the men of Tipperary thought of welcoming him with a blunderbuss, he lived to see them ready to die for him, to a man.

Whether my experiences in the game of marbles



had anything to do with it, or whether Dr. Croke left Mallow for his New Zealand diocese before I was of confessional age, my earliest religious relations were not with him, but with a singular and stern-looking priest, over six feet in height, a scholar and a solitary man, whose face was seldom softened with a smile, and who came to be known to the awe-stricken parishioners as "Father Danger." His eye would disperse a band of "mitching" school-boys, or clear the "Navigation Road" of whispering lovers, as effectually as a troop of dragoons. To bring out his rigour in stronger relief, his fellow-curate was an angelic old gentleman, the Abbé Moriarty by name, who had spent the greater part of his life as the chaplain of a courtly family in France, and for whose sweetness of character and holiness of life one might search in vain for a parallel outside the life of the Poverello of Assisi. I tried, very faintly indeed, to reproduce some of the traits of the Abbé in the "Father Phil" of *When we were Boys*, except that, so far as I know, the Abbé never bestowed a thought on politics, or indeed upon anything else except Heaven and the poor. The contrast between the popularity of the two priests was always strikingly manifested in the picture of their respective confessionals on Saturdays. At both wings of the Abbé's confession-box stretched long lines of penitents, waiting patiently for many hours "to be heard," while there were at most two or three venturesome figures hovering about "Father

Danger's" box, on the opposite side of the Church (or of "the Chapel," as it was always called in those only half-emancipated days). How exactly I came to be one of the greatly daring two or three, I cannot at all remember; what is certain is that, once there, there I remained, as long as "Father Danger" was there to receive my confidences, or I to hazard them. I sometimes think that if the years I spent under his dread rule were the years I can look back upon with least trepidation before the Eternal Judgment Seat, my terror of sin may have been less inspired by the fear of the Lord than by the fear of "Father Danger." At any rate, those years expand before my memory now in a sun-bright stream of innocence and illumination of soul, in comparison with which the insensibility and sin and paltry preoccupations of later years suggest many a heavy reproach.

I never had the privilege of meeting Father Murphy (who died a Canon of Cloyne) in maturer years, when I might better have gauged the true character behind its outward grimness, but I have no doubt his gruff reserve covered much profound thinking, a stern patriotism, and a devoted solicitude for the warm-hearted people who shivered at his approach; and I am quite sure that, in my own case, the merciless judge of the confessional was a true and loving friend, much as he shrank from showing it.

One instance of his Draconic severity has its

comic side. I once indulged in the fearful joy of mitching from school with a band of older truants. We devoted the idle hours to robbing an orchard in a secluded place behind the Glens. The fact that I could have helped myself to better apples in our own orchard, without transgressing the Commandments, did not, of course, deter me from trying the forbidden fruit, and I am afraid the knowledge that the orchard on which we descended had no more formidable guardianship than that of an old woman and her tongue was not one of the least attractions of the expedition for our unchivalrous crew. When, in due course, I avowed the trembling tale, helpless old woman and all, "Father Danger" uttered the one awful word "Restitution!" and shut the slide between him and me with a click more dreadful in my ears than the sound of *Lasciate ogni speranza* as I read it in after times on hell's gate. What was to be done? After much despairing reflection, I betook myself on my solitary pilgrimage up the Gallows-hill road to the rifled orchard, probably in at least as miserable a frame of mind as some of the wretches who formerly mounted the Gallows-hill road on their last earthly journey. I called out to the old woman from outside the orchard fence, with an uneasy apprehension that she would recognise me and hand me over to public justice. The apprehension was groundless, and, on my demand for a pennyworth of apples, she proceeded to collect them, and



brought back a handful of green pippins. My resolution was taken. I put into her hand the threepence which represented all my earthly savings in the pasteboard bank supplied to us children for that purpose, and at the same moment, dropping the handful of apples at her feet, took to my legs and fled as though the Phooka were pursuing me, leaving the poor old lady with her apples and her threepence, and, I have no doubt, with the most extraordinary intellectual puzzle of her life to unriddle.

Our old parish priest, Father Justin M'Carthy, I remember chiefly as he used to stand at the outer chapel-gate of Sundays, by the side of the collectors—immense, august, and grim, a king of men, a tower in Israel, with his stout oak stick, his grizzled eyebrows, and his great coffee-coloured silk handkerchief, in which he blew a note whose tantarara seemed to resound through the town. Father Justin was the Chairman of O'Connell's "Defiance" Banquet; in one of the bloody affrays of the Tithe War, at Gortroe, he rushed into the line of fire between the troops and the peasants and stopped the bloodshed; with his own hand he coffined victims of the famine fever, when there was nobody else bold enough to coffin them, and sometimes nobody else to give them coffins. I have heard people say he more than once wanted his own breakfast while his brother, Father John (afterwards Bishop of Cloyne), whom he loved with

all the strength of his soul, lay ill of the pestilence. The wild commotion caused by his death pressed upon my youthful imagination as one of the portents forerunning the end of the world.

Master O'Connor's box-wood "slapper" was not successful as an educationist in my case. The effect was to convince everybody, and especially myself, that I was a hopeless dunce. Books were to me cruel puzzles, and school a place of torment, reminding me of the pictures of "Hell opened to Christians," where demons were depicted stirring up the wicked in their pit of fire, with forks which seemed to be simply three-pronged "slappers." My mother's views of "the slapper" coincided with my own, and I soon followed my elder brother to a classical school kept by a worthy old soul, Mr. Edward FitzGerald, under whose scratch wig the whole world of ancient Greece and Rome was palpitating. The reign of "the slapper" was over for ever. The utmost pitch of indignation of which "Old Edward" (as we used to call him) was capable, was a prolonged, agonising "A-a-a-h!" into which he contrived to throw as much expression as a French actress, followed, in the case of some special enormity, by his seizing the scratch wig and flinging it on the table. The injudicious laughed betimes, but in the long run the scratch wig proved mightier than the sword. To do anything to extract "Old Edward's" "A-a-a-h!" came to be thought a meanness and a dishonour. To my own

amazement, whatever drag-weights had hitherto clogged my small brain were all of a sudden removed, and the machinery began to work merrily away.

Mr. FitzGerald's pupils (my brother included) were mostly intended for the Church. His classes accordingly were almost entirely devoted to the Greek and Roman classics. I knew all about Virgil before ever I read a page of Shakespeare. I could construct trashy Greek verses at a time when my handwriting in English was little above the dignity of pothooks. I could tell nearly every battle of the Peloponnesian Wars, as Grote told them, years before I had heard of Crecy or Agincourt. But to me the miracle was to find that anything was to be learned except by torture, or that even torture could extract anything from my own benumbed brain. At twelve years of age, profoundly ignorant of all that was modern, I could rattle through all the common school classics—even Livy's gnarled sentences and Herodotus' Egyptian adventures—with a facility, and even joy, that sometimes made "Old Edward's" eyes beam at me over his spectacles with a paternal fondness.



## CHAPTER III

### DAYDREAMS

AFTER drinking deeply of the Pierian spring which "Old Edward's" classic wand struck from the rock, I was removed to the Cloyne Diocesan College, the principal High School of the district. The expense was serious, but I think my parents were much impressed by the verdict of a lady phrenologist of much celebrity in her hour, who made a singularly accurate estimate in writing of my brother's mental equipment, and, as my own cranium was then in too undeveloped a condition for a detailed judgment, could only be got to say of me that whatever was spent on my education would not be wasted.

The new school was a pretentious villa affair, in a park, and the Principal, Mr. J. Wilson Wright, was a Trinity College graduate of distinction. His French usher, who was a bit of a dandy, was also a man of parts. His class, I am afraid, paid less attention to Telemachus than to the poor man's clumsy way of dyeing his moustache, the black evidences of which were painfully visible to the least observant eye.

Three-fourths of the pupils were Protestant. Here, again, my experience of the commingling of classes and creeds was of the same happy character as all my early recollections of Mallow. During my three years at the Diocesan College, I never heard a jarring word on any religious topic. We Catholics had the advantage of an additional half-hour's liberty while our brother pupils were shut up for Scripture lessons. The fact did more to sharpen their sense of the attractions of Catholicity in the eyes of some of our young Scripture-reading comrades than to inspire them with any theological ambition to proselytise us. Nor did the College books of history, which were almost inevitably hostile to our own prepossessions, have any effect except to harden us hopelessly in our sins, since we set out with the inflexible determination to believe just the opposite of what they told us on all controversial topics. For example, Hume was our English historian. There was scarcely a date or a fact from cover to cover of his *History* that was not once on the tip of my tongue, including every chip of the family tree of the Kings of England, with their sisters and their cousins and their aunts, from the latest Hanoverian duke back to the Conqueror. But all this affected my sympathies as little as a table of logarithms. I read Hume's heresies about St. Thomas à Beckett, and about the hapless Queen of Scots, and about the battle of the Boyne with as easy a mind as, in days to come, I perused the

*Times* articles on "Parnellism and Crime." I wanted no stronger evidence as to a given statement than that it was made by Hume to disbelieve it. His way of prancing over the victorious battlefields of England as if she had none but victorious battlefields simply drove me to find out for myself all about Blankenbergh and the Cadiz expedition, Steinkirk and Nieuwirde, Almanza and Fontenoy, Walcheren and Toulon, De Ruyter's Broom and Burgoyne's Surrender ; and our own Benburbs, and Yellow Fords, and Races of Castlebar.

In fact, we of the Catholic and Nationalist minority occupied very much the same position of self-reliant strength on the benches of the Cloyne Diocesan College as the Irish Party, then in the womb of time, afterwards came to occupy on the green benches of the House of Commons ; with this important difference, indeed, that nobody thought of challenging us to combat for our opinions.

In school hours my mastery of the common classics gave me an easy ascendancy over the bulk of my honest, blunderheaded comrades, who had no soul for the languages, and whom I spent half my time in helping over the stile. There was no danger, however, of the disease diagnosed by the Americans as "swelled head." The facility which had cost me so little trouble seemed the humblest of distinctions. I was only fifteen when I was fortunate enough to win the first prize in the "Senior" Division at our annual examinations. The Prin-



cipal—"the Skipper" was our irreverent way of titling him—read the names of the prize-winners solemnly out, and the unexpected sound of my name gave my heart a curious twitch, as if a bullet had grazed it. My feeling was one of utter incredulity at finding myself first at anything. I quite expected the "Skipper" to correct himself, and announce that there had been some mistake. I am afraid I should have willingly swapped all the poets and gods of Greece for the honour of being called first, or even fifth, by the football captains when picking out their rival teams in the playing field. Alas! being the weedy, gawky lad I was, the football captains gave me a wide berth, until they had got down to the lees of the talent available. My only use in the football field was my long legs, and it came to be noted as one of the few advantages of having me on a side that the big fellows, who were demons in a scrimmage, but weak in the classics, would sometimes corruptly give me a long run with the ball, in consideration of Homeric or Virgilian favours to come.

The young prizeman was, indeed, the most bashful and insignificant of awkward boys, with a boundless capacity for reverence and an oppressive sense of the mystery of things, and was only conscious of his own existence at all through a shrinking sense of his littleness, such as a fly might feel amidst the mountains of marble and gold in St. Peter's, when a Pope's High Mass is at its height. Few men

have ever lived better fitted to ask, with eyes of wonder :

Ah, did you once see Shelley plain,  
And did he stop and speak to you ?

I have always preferred not to see the objects of my reverence too closely, for fear of dispersing the halo with which distance invests great objects and great men. During all the years I spent hovering about the altar as an acolyte, I am sure that I never once touched even the outside of the tabernacle.

Perhaps an early development of the optical disease which at one time threatened to deprive me of sight may to some extent explain the fact that in those days I never quite realised what passed behind the red curtains of the choir, and formed to myself all sorts of ecstatic theories as to the origin of the hymns, for which, as afterwards became clear, an ancient harmonium and a shoemaker's daughter with a beautiful voice were chiefly responsible.

Curiously enough, the tendency to idealise, and to weave reverential aureoles even about common things, pursued me into the English House of Commons itself. Politically, I entered the chamber with no more mercy for its traditions than Caractacus would have felt in the Golden House of the Cæsars, if he had the power (which to a great extent we had) of pulling down its pillars about the conquerors' ears. But there was a sort of secondary consciousness, perhaps derived from Hallam, of awful

presences in the background—shades of the patriots of the Long Parliament, of the men who measured themselves with Kings; echoes of the undaunted words that struck Charles's head off, that arraigned Warren Hastings; of the spirit that, from a rude island, raised England to the primacy of the world. I am quite sure that, had I been an Englishman, I should never have uttered a word above a timid "Hear, hear!" in that solemn presence. Being an Irishman, I could afford only to see the ignorance and brutal arrogance that condemned my own sensitive nation to centuries of bitter injustice. There were plenty of vulgar tyrants and cat-calling coercionists opposite us to drown the recollections of the Pym and Burkes and Foxes, and to give us Irishmen a fierce joy in trampling upon and dishonouring every tradition of their Holy of Holies.

I once went within an ace of seizing upon and smashing the mace of the House of Commons, and doubtless having my own head smashed in the course of the operation. Could I have forgotten that it represented English power in Ireland, I should as soon have laid hands on the Ark of the Covenant. Even about the Treasury Bench, while it was manned with enemies with whom we were in deadly conflict, there floated a certain atmosphere, some vague cloud of Olympus, which made its denizens seem not quite as other men. I did not want to come close to them in a division lobby, and be made to see what wrinkled, care-



worn, commonplace creatures of clay they mostly were.

Judge, then, what a world of simple faith in everybody and everything except myself possessed my worshipping young soul in the chastening days of a contemptuous football field and of "Father Danger's" confessional. From the first, I can trace the love of solitude which the whole of my active life has been a vain endeavour to dispel. It arose from, or at least first fed upon, the story of the *terre des Anges* which the first hermits established in the midst of the golden sands of the Libyan desert. It was not that religion in itself, powerful as was its spell, was the overmastering attraction. Like all well-brought-up Irish boys, I had my daydreams of the priesthood, and once cut up a valuable poplin dress of my mother's to make unto myself vestments for a Mass of my own, at which my little sister officiated as acolyte; but my mother's indignation at the fate of her poplin was sufficient to cure me of that ambition. Long before suspecting why "*quare tristis es, anima mea? et quare conturbas me?*" has been for endless ages the deepest cry of the human heart, the mere golden immensities of the Thebaid, the wattled hut under the pines on the summit of Alverno, seemed to be in themselves abodes of bliss, where Robinson Crusoe became divine. But he of Assisi did not loiter a-dreaming in the sunny Apennines: he hurried away to the company of the lepers. His combination of the delights of the

contemplative life with the rude exhilaration of active duty was the celestial figure of my own blurred terrestrial ideal. Solitary contemplation was the luxury, activity the inborn sting and spur, the still small voice which always made it impossible for me to be a lazy man, however fervidly I pined to be a dreamy one. In the sense of the poet's exclamation—

How sweet, how passing sweet, is solitude !  
But grant me still a friend in my retreat,  
Whom I may whisper, Solitude is sweet—

a quietude, which some would esteem loneliness, has remained to the last for me the solace, the inspiration, the celestial liquor of life and its principal prize.

Nor had my solitariness the slightest tinge of sadness. The only form in which I have ever been at home in crowded assemblies has been as an unknown looker-on, but other people's ways and amusements commanded my utmost sympathy and admiration so long as I might be allowed to glide among them unobserved.

My ways of amusing myself must have undeniably seemed peculiar, if anybody knew them. But next to nobody did. My favourite eyrie was on one of the topmost branches of a "Molly" tree, the highest in our garden. Here I would bask by the hour upon my gently shaking couch, amidst the apple blossoms or the green fruit, to the wrath of our honest old factotum Tom Herlihy, who

rightly considered that my proceedings were not conducive to the prosperity of apple blossoms or apples on the finest tree in the orchard. Sometimes the hours passed in mere wandering thought, formless and indolent. It was enough to be rocked to and fro by the wind, to look down over the orchard—every tree of which to this hour has for me its own special name and flavour—to see my father, in straw hat and shirt sleeves, filling in his trench of celery, or sowing his bed of turnips; my brothers, with half-a-dozen noisy companions, jumping “Sheela,” our pony, over the fences; my mother presiding over the steaming brown teapot in the summer-house, while the robins hopped about to claim their dividend of the good things. It was all delicious, and it was sufficient occupation.

The thirst for reading was one of the grand correctives of this John-o'-dreams propensity. Many of the books that have most influenced my life present themselves to me, as it were, in a binding of apple leaves, with the spacious library of open sky and fragrant orchard trees spreading around.

Dangerously little as I had to learn at the High School, there, at least, I first got some scent of English Literature, and followed up the trail with the avidity of a bloodhound. I was not depending upon the orthodox school text-books, however, for my quarry. In a store-room behind our tiny drawing-room, which was usually locked, there lay a con-



siderable heap of books piled pell-mell together. Whether my father, who was a well-read man, had acquired them for his own reading, or whether they had come into his possession in one of his capacities as an auctioneer, I cannot tell. The room was also used for the safe keeping of a monster Christmas cake, which a Tralee cousin was in the habit of sending us, and it was in one of our raids upon the plum-cake that the other treasure of forbidden fruit first presented itself. There was a valuable edition of the *Letters of Junius* in gold-stamped yellow leather. The letters themselves weighed upon my young mind like lead, but there were rare book-plates of the Butes, Shelburnes, and Wilkes, to which I paid the Gothic compliment of cutting them out and heightening their attractions with water-colours of a merit that may be imagined. There were eight or ten volumes of Swift, and a fine collection of the Waverley Novels. Here also I first made acquaintance with Uncle Toby and the swearing capacity of the irreverent army in Flanders. There was also what must have been a precious English edition of Rabelais. I regret to say I wholly failed to catch the point or humour of the great satire. Friar John's pranks did not at all impress me favourably; Pantagruel's voyage to Utopia, having a certain flavour of Robinson Crusoe, alone kept me from yawning, while the author's ribald words fell upon my ear with as little charm as those of some tipsy old man misconducting

himself grossly. The same cannot be said for the seductive adventures of *Gil Blas de Santillane*, as to which I at least came to know that slices of them were a guiltier form of indulgence than slices of the plum-cake.

In my father's own bookcase downstairs, along with the Douay Bible and the *Four Masters*, Lever's novels, MacNevin's *History of the Irish Volunteers*, and so forth, there was a heavy tome reporting the State Trial of O'Connell. This book of eight or nine hundred pages I would spend hours poring over, during the winter evenings, by the fireside, to the intense satisfaction of my father, who supposed I was engrossed in the portentous legal debates as to demurrers and amendments of the indictment, and challenges of the array, and was thus developing the "legal mind" which would have realised his most ardent vow for my future. He little suspected that the real charm of the book was the crimes of the traversers, and not the *Nisi prius* antics of their prosecutors. It was not the "legal mind" but the "illegal mind" that was in full course of development. The only legal impressions I carried away from my readings—but they are impressions of the kind that shape a life—were, first, by what foul methods a jury can be packed in Ireland; and secondly, what fools were all these high and mighty judges and law officers who, by embodying in their colossal indictment the choice bits of O'Connell's speeches and of the *Nation's*

writings, made their own law books a liberal education in Irish Nationality.

It is scarcely too much to say that two years of my life were devoted to an amusement or folly of a more singular character. This was the creation of an army complete in all its departments, and its manipulation throughout a long series of wars, every minutest detail of which was duly recorded. The soldiers were of pasteboard; I cut them out, and supplied them with faces and weapons and painted their uniforms myself. There were infantry and cavalry and artillery—even to the detail of lancers and cuirassiers and dragoons. When the force was at its height it comprised more than sixty regiments, each divided into companies and squadrons, with the name of every officer written at the back, and the number and company of every soldier. I came to know the faces of the generals and colonels, and even captains, so familiarly that I could tell their names without turning to the back. They, in fact, came to be to me living personalities in whose fortunes I was sometimes painfully interested.

A spare room at the top of the house was given up to me as the field of war. Here the entire floor was often covered with mimic soldiers (they must have numbered at least twelve thousand all told), waging their pitched battles till the sun went down. The idea of this queer *Kriegspiel* was to work out the intestine wars of the five Irish provincial kingdoms, on the theory that National Unity would



develop itself after all by the survival of the fittest. The force was accordingly divided into five armies, whose combinations and conflicts under their provincial kings dragged along for many a month of varying fortunes. I was myself the strategist that planned the manœuvres, surprises, and combinations with impartial brain on both sides ; the far-darting Apollo who dispensed wounds and death with a little steel-tipped arrow ; and the disinterested historian who, instantly that the fight was over, placed the facts on record in every particular in voluminous Orders of the Day. Sternly as I strove to an Olympian superiority to the affairs of the small mortals in pasteboard arrayed beneath me, I am afraid it must be owned that the far-darting Apollo was sometimes, at critical moments, a bad shot as against the O'Briens. Certain it is that, when the wars were interrupted, National evolution was tending decisively towards the victory of the O'Briens and the men of Munster. Absurd as the avowal may seem to be, if I were asked to pick out the labour of my life which involved most patience, devotion, dogged persistency, and hard work, I should be obliged to point to my toy armies and their prolonged campaigns. The only consolation I can find for the wasted energy is, that it possibly helped to train me into habits of patiently thinking out details and planning out vast combinations of men.

The wars were waged and their history written

wholly for my own edification. The rest of the family never exhibited the smallest interest in my hobby, until my father once chanced to drop in on the field of battle, and with a face of dismay beheld the innumerable hosts, and glanced through the bulky gazettes in which their campaigns stood recorded. The alarm of the Government at the extent of the Fenian movement was at its height at the moment. If, in the course of a police search for arms and documents, they had come across this miniature army, with its minute organisation and mysterious records, Heaven only knows what treasonable conspiracy they would have supposed to underlie the discovery. I little knew the danger then, and went into despair over my father's instant resolve to consign the entire host, with their banners and books, to the flames, with the ruthlessness of another Caliph Omar. The utmost concession he would make to my tears was, that they should be buried underground in the garden, until quieter times. The time came when it was quite safe to dig them up again, but in the meantime there had come also that heaviest of heavy dragoons, Black Care, to summon myself to the first battle of real life. The toy soldiers could never come to life again.

What first set me committing my thoughts to paper I cannot recall. The habit dates as far back as my relish for plum-cakes and seems to have been as truly a law of nature. Verse was, of course, the

first way of escape for the mysteries and longings that were surging vaguely up for expression. There is still in the possession of a friend a ream of note-paper, stitched together into a manuscript book, valiantly entitled *The Poetical Works of William O'Brien*, amidst clumsily drawn wreaths of sham-rocks; it being further set forth that it was "Published at Ballydaheen, Mallow," the poet and publisher being then in his thirteenth year. The verses were irredeemable rubbish. All that can be pleaded for the *Poetical Works* is that no human eye except my own ever perused them, or was expected to peruse them, until, in the break-up of our family belongings, many years after, my friend, Mr. M'Weeney, lighted upon the comical "publication." But my self-sufficing "publications" did not end here. It may perhaps be taken as one more proof that the journalist is born and not made, that at an age when it seemed as little likely I would ever see the inside of a newspaper office as the inside of a Cabinet Council Chamber, I fell into the habit of writing and "publishing" (always for my own undivided perusal) a daily news-sheet, announcing my own matured judgments on the events of the day. One of these has by some strange chance survived and is still in my possession. It bears the grandiose title: "*The Voice of Ireland*: Printed and Published at Mallow," and is a two-column sheet of four pages, with learned observations on the crowning of the Emperor of Austria as King of



Hungary, the latest Algerine law for the suppression and transportation of the Fenians, and so forth, winding up with the fanciful announcement, "Price, One Penny." The One Penny was never paid, for the good reason, among others, that I kept my journalistic secrets wholly to myself. How *The Voice of Ireland* came to be finally smothered I cannot now remember. Very likely my journal, like my army, somehow came under the eye of my father, and alarmed him equally by the clash of pikes and rifles in its pages.

If I kept an army and a daily paper for my private amusement, it was through fear of being laughed at if I took anybody into my confidence. No one was readier to make friends with anybody who would be content to talk religion, poetry, or patriotism. Most of my little contemporaries naturally thought these, like the Latin and Greek classics, were subjects for school hours—very excellent, but very hard on small boys. Probably he among my early schoolfellows with whom I should have had most in common was the Very Rev. Dr. Sheehan of later days—poet, mystic, novelist, and homilist—most delightful of companions in his books, but in his unformed school-days as pale and diffident and moonstruck as myself. But he, from the beginning, lived as in a cloister, and he had departed for his ecclesiastical training long before either of us could have guessed with how many strangely congenial thoughts our youthful

heads were throbbing. Accordingly, it was generally alone I found myself rambling towards the heather on the top of the mountain, Knockarowra, which overlooks the town. The mountain and the heather always had a singular fascination for me. Stretched, up to the eyes, amidst the clean-smelling heather-bells, I would look down with rapture over the rich valley of the Blackwater, with the pretty town and the country houses of the "aristocracy" nestling in the woodlands along its banks, and would people the heath with the promised army of Fenian deliverers (my brother Jim was always a heroic figure in their forefront), marching down with dancing plumes and banners to overwhelm the staff of the North Cork Militia, which at that time represented in Mallow all the available might of England. Our favourite weather prophet was this mountain. When a rain-cloud enveloped its top, the announcement of foul weather was "Daniel Shea has his night-cap on," in allusion to some immemorial legend of an old man who once lived in a hut upon the mountain-side, and was evicted generations ago. Many a thousand miles away from Knockarowra, I was one night addressing a vast assemblage in Philadelphia, and making a collection in aid of the Irish cause, when a man, who was one of the most thriving citizens of that great community, came on the platform, and stuffing a bill for a thousand dollars into my hand—"You remember Daniel Shea of Knockarowra, and his night-cap? I'm his

grandson. God bless ye all in Ireland!" It is the history of the scattered race for a generation put in a nutshell.

The very poor were the only persons with whom I was on thoroughly easy terms. The house in the poor suburb of Ballydaheen to which we removed from the house in which I was born in the middle of the town was a substantial three-storey building in the middle of a long string of cabins, amidst whose poverty it had a comparatively imposing air, like a big brother in better circumstances. My father was the owner of a middle interest in the houses on our own side of the street, and the weekly rents—two shillings at the highest, and sixpence at the lowest—were collected by our man-of-all-work, Tom Herlihy. I was his constant companion on his visitations to the cabins, with the result that, in my own small way, I early became acquainted with the secrets of Irish poverty, and charmed with its picturesque side. It was hard to say whose companionship I enjoyed the more—Tom's or the tenants'. Tom Herlihy was of the old school of Irish servants—faithful unto death, reliable as the Bank of England, absolutely illiterate, but as safe in his figures, juster than most judges, and very much more generally respected. Tom's visits meant a long and amicable committee of ways and means, which was conducted by the side of the fire in the Gaelic language. If a week's work was not to be had (as, alas! for half the year it seldom was), Tom



smoked the pipe of peace for a while by the fire until he was master of the facts, and then handed the pipe to the tenant for a "shaugh" by way of consolation. If there came a good week, the precious shilling, or even an additional shilling of arrears, was slowly but cheerfully unwound from the corner of the handkerchief. The poor people's honesty and the delightful little charities on both sides by which the negotiations were conducted made upon my young mind an impression which has never been rubbed out.

My incurable propensity for "slumming" gave my poor mother some anxious hours. My love for the cabins had nothing whatever in common with Tolstoi's hobby for wearing a peasant's blouse at Yasnaia Paliana. I was too young to have a smattering of humanitarian sympathy with the poor. On the contrary, I frequented the cabins because life in the cabins seemed more delicious than anywhere else. Their inmates were more to be envied than pitied, so snugly sitting in their weird mist of turf-smoke together. Once my father took an effective way of curing me of the craze. He announced that I should have my wish, and that they had handed me over altogether to one of our labourers, Tom Sheehan by name. I agreed, and that evening, when his work was done, accompanied Tom Sheehan with a stout heart home to his cabin. I found the open fireplace and the fowl winking up under the thatch delightful. I was shown a

heap of rushes in a dark corner, which was to be my bed. Nothing could be better. I was told that I should have to get up at six o'clock in the morning and follow my new foster-father to weed turnips. Still there was no shrinking. Supper-time came, and a pot of Indian meal stirabout, which had been poked about with a black potstick, was turned out for our refreshment. Then my craven soul began to fail me.

"I want my tea," I said, turning away from the repulsive mess.

"Oh! How could we afford tea?" was the reply.

"Well, then," I said, making a last rally, "give me some milk to take with—this!" dipping a spoon into the platter of yellow stuff before me.

"Milk?" said Tom Sheehan in his sternest mood.

"Maybe you'll be wanting currant cake next?"

I looked at him for a moment in terror, not quite certain that the ogre to whom I had sold my soul would not develop horns and hoofs, and carry me off in a flash of fire for the bold boy I was. Then I made a dash for the door, unlatched it, and fled, howling, until I plunged into the arms of my mother, in whose tears I found ample consolation for the pitiless public opinion of the rest of the family.

A last word of honest old Tom Herlihy. A time of trouble came, as I shall have to tell hereafter, when we were "expecting the sheriff," and the fine old mahogany tables disappeared, and the

household expenses had to be pared down to the last penny. There was no longer much need for poor Tom, and his wages had to be taken in reduced dividends like the rest ; but, as he used to say, " I am too old to begin the world now." Happily for him, the time had come not for beginning, but for ending it. We struggled along together to the last, and one of my latest recollections of our life in Mallow was the funeral of Tom Herlihy, which somehow seemed to be our own family funeral there as well.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE FENIAN CYCLE

1865-1867

THE first time I heard tell of the "Fenians" must have been in the early part of the year 1865, when I overheard a conversation between my brother and one of the senior pupils at Mr. FitzGerald's school. I caught the whispered phrase, "The Fenians were drilling last night in the Barrister's Wood." Instantly, visions of a moonlight host, who might be either mysterious soldiers of liberty or the "good people" (as the fairies were still respectfully named), took possession of my imagination. To the timid question, "Who are the Fenians?" my brother's reply was a frown and a threat to "thrash me black and blue" if he ever caught me uttering the word again.

He left us soon after for St. Colman's College in Fermoy. His mother had fondly marked him out for a priest, but he was not long in making up his mind that nature had inexorably stamped him for a soldier. When he came home on vacation six

months after, and announced that he had had enough of the Christian classics, his mother wept as bitterly as if a soldier he had been, and had been brought home dead from the wars. Whether he contracted the Fenian fever at St. Colman's, or had been himself the means of spreading it there, it is not now possible to determine. Dr. Croke, who was the President of the College, had in his own hot youth volunteered to take John Mitchel's place at the head of a journal which was really an armed insurrection in type, with the full knowledge that the consequence within a very few weeks must be either that the ink must be turned into blood or he himself transported beyond the seas. He was at the Irish College in Paris when the Revolution broke out. He often related to me himself how he scaled the College walls to find himself in the thick of the fighting. Lamartine's revolutionists burned the throne, but respected the altar; priests freely blessed the trees of Liberty planted on the ruins of Louis-Philippe's feeble tyranny. Dr. Croke was one of the *récompensés* who were decorated by the National Assembly for heroism at the barricades. That such a man—the idol and the playfellow of his students, who was himself, in his towering strength and dauntless manhood, the very embodiment of a great soldier—must have inspired his students with some part of his own passionate Irish patriotism is certain. But it is no less certain that he had no suspicion that so many of the young fellows under

his ferule were at that moment whispering of a coming insurrection as an event as sure to come off as the summer vacation ; and that, if once he had got scent of the conspiracy, he would have stamped it out—not for love of England, but for love of discipline—with the same thorough-paced determination he had shown on the Paris barricades.

Jim returned home, at all events, to await “the Rising,” as his one object and vocation in life. He could not then avoid dropping hints of what was in the air. He read for me poems of his own making, which were plain treason, and rattled along from stanza to stanza like the crackle of musketry. I found him one day replacing a brick behind the fireplace in our common bedroom. When through curiosity I removed the brick myself, it was to discover a revolver in a cavity behind. He used to spend much of his time at an old corn mill in Arthur’s Glen, where it also became one of my recreations to work the windlass in hoisting sacks of corn to the upper floors and to shovel the maize towards the shoots, and listen with ears erect to the cryptic political allusions of the miller, Dan Daly, and his men. One day I was moving towards the door of a disused room, where a former miller had dwelt, when Dan Daly cried out, “Don’t go in there for your life. There’s a swarm of bees in the chimney.” I had turned the handle of the door, however, and found the room filled with men. The “swarm of bees in the chimney” were men with



bullet moulds, casting bullets by the fire, and the rest were being drilled by an army pensioner, with spades and shovels for their muskets. I should myself have joyfully fallen into the ranks without any further ratiocination; but Dan Daly and his men, with a consideration for a boy of fourteen which I now find charming, however it offended me at the time, kept me resolutely out of the secret circle; and my brother, then and to the end of the movement, showed a fierce determination to exclude me from the dangers he affronted with a light heart for himself. "Don't you think 'tis enough to have one of the family hanged?" he once said, with a grim jocularly which I scarcely half-understood at the time. He would willingly read or sing his own treason-songs for me, and be proud of my ardent attention; but beyond that he would seldom, of his own volition, lift a corner of the secrecy which was beginning to envelop his life.

By the autumn of 1865, however, the existence and the vast dimensions of the conspiracy had become a secret of Polichinello. The absurd fizzle, from a military point of view, in which the Fenian movement ended, when in its broken and headless condition it was finally forced to take the field, makes it difficult for people nowadays to realise the extraordinary ascendancy it obtained over the youth of the country, and even over the forces of the Crown. When a troop of the 6th Carabineers were passing through Mallow that summer, we youngsters,

who roamed about the livery stables to see them grooming their horses, heard them humming the Fenian Charter-song, "Hark, the time is coming!" at their work, as gleefully and unreservedly as Dan Daly and his men would chorus it at the mill. As for the North Cork Militia, who were called up for training in Mallow that summer, I doubt whether there were a dozen men in the regiment, barring the officers and staff sergeants, who were not sworn Fenians. They applied themselves to their military instruction with a fervour unexampled in the history of that respectable corps, whose military enthusiasm had hitherto confined itself to the thirty shillings'-worth of a spree with which the training wound up. Even in marching through the streets to the parade-ground, I heard them raising the spirit-stirring chorus, "Out and make way for the Fenian men!" and chaffing an ancient, podgy, puffing, and perspiring Major Braddell with such good-humoured observations as, "Take the world easy, Major. The boys won't see you short of a pension when the American officers come across."

The constabulary were, of all the servants of the Crown in Ireland, almost the only body who did not soften in the Fenian atmosphere. But, even of the score of policemen in Mallow, I knew at least five who were of my brother's "Circle," and afterwards manfully paid the hazard. One of them (I believe he has long since passed into a world where constabulary black marks will no longer tell against

him, so it is safe to give his name) was a genial giant of the name of O'Brien, affectionately known to the children as "Long John." The "Centre," or, as he was more cautiously named, the "Boss," of the Mallow district was a shopkeeper in good standing, a well set-up and determined-looking man of forty, with a soldierly moustache and "Napoleon," John Sullivan by name. When in the late autumn of 1865 the Government at last struck at the heads of the conspiracy, and filled the jails and unloosed the informers, Sullivan was one of the first against whom a warrant was levelled. There was a general sense of uneasiness and gloom as to his fate. The evening on which the warrant was to be executed, my mother and a lady friend, passing Sullivan's house, saw a policeman leaning against the shutters, and instinctively looked up at the windows with a shudder. The huge policeman quietly sidled up to them as they passed, and, with a broad smile on his good-humoured face, whispered, "'Tis all right, ma'am. The 'Boss' is off by the Cork road two hours ago!" It was "Long John" solemnly guarding the nest from which the bird had flown.

As for the army pensioners, there was not a town or village that could not easily find a drill-master for its fire-eyed young conscripts. Tom Condon, now one of the members for Tipperary, and himself at the time six feet one of high treason, tells (and better still sings) a story of the local drill-master in Clonmel, which gives an amusing, but absolutely



true glimpse of the spirit of the times. One of Davis's most popular battle-songs is "The Green above the Red!" There is scarcely a line of it that a loyal servant of England could repeat without wincing. It begins :

Full often when our fathers saw the Red above the Green,  
They rose in rude but fierce array with sabre, pike, and skian,  
And over many a noble town and many a field of dead,  
They proudly set the Irish Green above the English Red !

The Clonmel pensioner was conscious that the loss of his pension must instantly follow a literal rendering of such a song. He eluded the difficulty by singing it in the following form, with a wink and a toss of the head where the suppressed passages came in :

Full often when our fathers saw—fallal de dal de da,  
They rose in rude but fierce array—fallal de dal de da,  
And over many a noble town and many a field of dead,  
They proudly set—fallal de da, *fallal de dal de da* !

By which ingenious casuistry the pensioner retained his pension and at the same time luxuriated in the full aroma of the rebel song. If the English reader fails to enjoy the pious fraud in a salaried servant of England, he will find food for more sombre reflection in the undoubted fact that the soldiers in uniform who would have at that moment joined in the pensioner's song were numbered by the thousand, and that there was hardly a well-grown youth in the country who would not have helped to swell the chorus.

My father frowned at my brother's opinions even more severely than at my paper regiments. The bitter awakening from his Young Ireland dreams and the horrors of the famine years had chilled his blood. Largely by his help, a distinguished Mallow man, Serjeant Sullivan, who was afterwards Lord Chancellor of Ireland, and who, in the labyrinth of the interminable "Four Courts" lawsuits of those days, had come to honour my father with a special intimacy and admiration, had been elected member for Mallow. I am afraid there were certain visions of his son's soaring into some well-upholstered eminence in the Four Courts under this illustrious patronage, which were dashed by the rumours of Jim's dangerous associations. With perhaps more cruelty than we could then have thought, we never failed to retort upon him, when he would inveigh against the madness of armed rebellion, by reminding him of his own days in the Confederate Club, and of Mr. Macleod's search-warrant. I can now better understand the bitterness of a father's reflection that it might any day be Serjeant Sullivan's duty to transport his son to Western Australia instead of installing him on velvet in the Four Courts.

My poor mother's view of the situation, so far as she had any inkling of it, was more mixed. A vague terror for her boy was uppermost. Then all she knew of Fenianism was that it had none of the outward sparkle and romance of the Young Ireland of her girlish days. It must, I think, be admitted

that she who had seen O'Connell in his glory had a certain shrinking from a movement whose principal personage in her own district was engaged in the bakery trade. She would recall for us the Tyrtæan songs of *The Nation*, and Meagher's words of flame, and would, with a sigh, say these were indeed songs and men to be proud of. Where were such songs and such men now? To which our answer was the somewhat brutal boast of a movement that was not rich in literature—that Ireland had had more than enough of drawing-room knights and their fopperies. A sentiment to which, rather inconsequentially, my brother had given voice in a fighting song of his own, which was chorussed at many a secret Fenian Hallali in the South :—

Enough of the Voice and the Pen, boys !  
Let us just try the Rifle—and then, boys,  
We'll die every man, or  
We'll plant our green banner  
Victorious o'er mountain and glen, boys !

I am not sure but that in the long run she came to think that, perhaps, Jim's songs could hold their own with any *Nation* poet of them all. Possibly it is no injustice to her sweet memory to suspect that Fenianism distinctly rose in her estimation (such air-drawn feminine consolations there be!) when she heard it whispered that one of the handsomest and most elegant of our young school-friends, Jack FitzGerald, was as deep as Jim in all these occult doings.



Further, my brother's popularity with girls and boys alike, if it brought its terrors, was also not without its thrill of pride. He was, at the time I am writing of, a dashing young giant, barely eighteen years of age, with massive shoulders, powerful bones, and a strong, square face, lit up with a pair of honest blue eyes, full of the giant's tenderness which women love. Whenever he was not at work with the bullet mould at the mill, he was throwing the sledge-hammer at the forge, or "beating a heat" with the lustiest of the blacksmiths; and if the mountain road by night often resounded with the measured tramp of men, it was still oftener vocal with the concerts and dances of blooming girls and joyous young rebels on the moonlit summer evenings. All of which, to some extent, conciliated maternal softness towards the coming Revolution, but, ah! at what a price of breathless listening for the truant's footsteps in the night, never knowing what sorrow or tragedy an hour might bring! with what pangs of agony to read of the first Special Commissions and transportations, and think where the next blow would fall, or how soon the songs and dances of the mountain road would end in ruin, ignominy, or bloodshed!

It requires little wit to ridicule the Fenian Rising of 1867 as a "Coroner's-inquest War." None but the very shallow will make merry over the ridiculous side of a very grave episode in the relations between England and the island which she has spent more

than seven centuries in endeavouring to tame. In the harvest of 1865, there were twenty regiments of Militia and at the least eight regiments of regulars at the call of any daring military spirit who should seize the Pigeon House, Cork and Clonmel Barracks, where the garrison were sworn friends. There were a hundred thousand—it might be nearer to the mark to say two hundred thousand—men in the country panting for the arms that would thus have been placed in their hands. The Irish of the English and Scottish cities were ready for anything. The United States were hungering to avenge the depredations of the *Alabama*, and had only just disbanded a hundred thousand Irish veterans of the Civil War, who would have swarmed across the Canadian frontier as joyfully as a bridegroom to his marriage feast. It was the psychological moment at which a soldier of Phil Sheridan's eye and nerve might have at least produced the bloodiest struggle England ever had to make for the subjugation of Ireland. It was a crisis when Napoleon's aphorism, "In war, men are nothing, a man is everything," was specially to the point. The Fenians had a superabundance of men, but not The Man; the hour passed, the blow that was not struck *by* them was struck *at* them, and although the conspiracy, decapitated and decimated by transportations, flight, and treachery, dragged along for some years more, it was but "playing whist for penny points after losing a fortune." The Rising, when it did take

place, was little better than a display of fireworks, where even the fireworks did not go off for want of gunpowder ; the performance was organised by a group of American officers in order not wholly to disappoint the somewhat noisy promises made in the *chaleur communicative* of American mass meetings.

Whoever was responsible for committing completely unarmed men to such an enterprise was a criminal of a very atrocious dye. It would be the worst of blunders, however, to form any contemptuous judgment of those American officers, much less of the tens of thousands of young Irishmen who rose unquestioningly at their signal. The American captain quartered in Mallow was a dusky, wide-awake-hatted, square-toed-booted warrior, the half-sewn sabre cut across whose cheekbone was a sufficient testimony that his record as a soldier was not to be disposed of by placing his military title in inverted commas, as the English papers were accustomed to do with their American prisoners at the time. How much truth there was in the favourite English taunt that these men were luxuriating upon the gold of the credulous Irish-Americans, one slight incident may be left to tell. A couple of days before the Rising, my brother appealed to me for a few shillings I had saved up as the price of various jobs of digging, weeding, and caterpillar-killing in the garden, and confided to me that the money was required in view of the



Rising, to release from the pawn office the Captain's topcoat, which he had been obliged in his pecuniary extremities to pledge! There is, doubtless, something comical enough in the warrior who was about to assail the colossal power of England being obliged to begin with a small financial operation for the release of his overcoat in view of the campaign, but I am quite sure I had more respect for the war-worn Captain in his topcoatless predicament than if he had appeared before me all glittering with gold and feathers.

The knowledge that a Rising was in contemplation was almost public property long before it took place. I was not, therefore, surprised when one afternoon in March my brother, who had spent a couple of hours composing some ringing verses beginning—

Be ready, be ready to-night, my boys!  
Our camp's in the wild wood glen—

read them over for me, and asked, "Can you guess what to-night means?" He would go into no further particulars with me, however. It was Shrove Tuesday night, and my poor mother, who little dreamed of what was before her, had made us an enormous dish of pancakes. When the feast was over, I followed Jim upstairs, where I found him disinterring the revolver from the receptacle at the back of the fireplace. He had mounted his topcoat, and I noticed that he had stuffed the

pockets full with pancakes. It was his boyish commissariat for the campaign against the power of England! It must be confessed that my own heroic contribution to the scene was to break down crying—I think it was the second last time in my life I was able to indulge in the luxury. He turned upon me with a very unusual gruffness. “What the mischief do you mean?” he said; “they’ll hear you!” Then relenting, he caught my hand, and whispered very softly, “Good-bye, Bill.” (I was Bill for my father and brothers, and Willie for my mother and sister.) “Good-bye, Bill; you’ll hear some news before morning.” He noiselessly undid the bolt and was gone into the night, from which a biting wind came in upon my face and froze me to the heart.

In the middle of the night I jumped out of bed at the sound of heavy tramping in the street. Presently a dark mass of men began to pass under the window. For a moment my heart bounded at the thought that they were the Revolution! It was only too evident, however, that the men in the greatcoats and with the sloped rifles were regulars. The next day I learned they were a company of Rifles, dispatched from Cork during the night to reinforce the troops collected at Mallow. Whoever sent these few scores of men out on a march of twenty-one miles through unknown dangers testified that the rebels had not a monopoly of the military follies which signalised the Rising. It afterwards

turned out that the company of Riflemen marched by a road not more than a mile from that by which more than two thousand of the Cork Fenians were marching out towards the same destination. Had the rebels possessed even a hundred guns, the Riflemen must have walked into their clutches before they could empty a second cartridge. The morning broke over a country speckled with a slight fall of snow, and swept by a pitiless March wind. A deadly stillness brooded over the town and the people. Towards mid-day a country gentleman, known familiarly as "Dicky Purcell," rode into Ballydaheen at a furious rate, his hat gone and his horse white with foam, and flew through the streets shouting, "The Fenians! The Fenians are coming!" Less panic-stricken messages arrived afterwards with the news that the constabulary barrack at Ballyknockane, some five miles away on the Cork Road, had been attacked, and that the policemen had surrendered. Later on the unfortunate policemen straggled in themselves, stripped of their arms and hugely frightened, giving what turned out to be a highly imaginative picture of the hosts that surrounded their humble fortress.

A considerable force of infantry, cavalry, and artillery had been concentrated in Mallow during the night. When I crossed the bridge into the town in search of news the streets were in a state of wild excitement. A troop of Lancers were standing by their saddles at the bridge. A company of



Highlanders had their rifles stacked higher up, at the top of the street which is now (if I may be forgiven the vanity of mentioning a fact which is not, perhaps, altogether a vanity) William O'Brien Street. The country gentlemen and their wives, with their plate and other valuables, were flocking in from all sides to take refuge with the army. The constabulary of the outlying country stations were arriving with carts containing their bedding and cooking utensils. The loyal (and I am disposed to think a considerable number of the disloyal) were being sworn in as special constables in squads. The poorer people stood aloof, mute and impenetrable. All sorts of rumours were flying. The railways had been torn up, both on the Cork and Tipperary sides. There was said to be an army of fifty thousand Fenians assembled on the Galtee Mountains. The Cork force, which had captured the Ballyknockane Barracks, was supposed to be in full march on Mallow. I made my way towards the railway station, which is situate on rising ground over the town, close to the Royal Hotel, which the General in command had made his headquarters. There was a battery of field-guns unlimbered on the plateau beside the station. I saw the General take his stand near the guns in the midst of a group of his officers, and direct his field-glass towards the stretch of white road on which the rebel force was every moment expected to make its appearance. I have been more than once since

face to face with death in shapes more unlovely than that which comes out of the mouth of great guns, but I never again experienced the same sickness of suspense, the same feeling of death in the soul, that oppressed me during those endless hours (I daresay they were only minutes) while I saw the artillerymen loading their pieces and watched the General's field-glass as it searched the Cork Road, and every instant expected to hear the boom of the first shell that would burst upon my brother's unarmed comrades.

The cannon had not to speak after all. Sufficient of the railway line remained uninjured to enable the General to despatch a trainful of infantry to the foot of Bottle Hill, across which the Fenians, finding Mallow occupied in force, were setting out on some wild march to join the imaginary army of the Galtees. There were not ten serviceable rifles in the entire rebel force; and before many shots had been exchanged, the Fenians drew off in the direction of Cork and broke up, and the infantry, who were in a scarcely more enviable plight through cold and hunger, were only too happy to let them depart in peace, without even attempting to make a prisoner, with the exception of one wounded man who was the only victim of the fusillade.

After dark we, listening for every sound with the ears of a Red Indian hunter, heard the garden gate opened and the latch of the back door lifted. It was my brother, footsore, starving, and utterly crestfallen,

with less thought for his supper, or, I am afraid, for the martyred hearts that had the worst of his adventure, than dejected over the lost illusions of twenty-four hours ago, and indignant with the incapacity or treachery that had called men out to establish an Irish republic without powder for their bullets or guns with which to discharge them. He told me that his own revolver was the only serviceable firearm which was available for the Mallow contingent. There was not one rifle to every hundred of the men who marched out from Cork that night. In their desperation they raided a shovel factory, and armed themselves with pitchforks and scythes, wherewith they went forth to confront the might of England!

During the night the police thundered at the door, and marched him off on a warrant for high treason. It must be acknowledged that he was treated with singular tenderness by his captors. We were allowed to supply him with a mattress for his little den in the Bridewell, and the grizzled old Bridewell-keeper, while he banged and rattled his keys and shouted "Prisoner O'Brien!" in a voice like a cat-o'-nine-tails, if the police were listening, would whisper to my mother in an amicable growl, "Don't you fret, ma'am; if you had him at home, you could not take better care of him."

I am proud to say that Mallow did not produce an informer—that hideous cancer which the Irish



Secret Society has a fatal gift of developing. But what saved my brother was what Dr. Johnson would call a "consecrated lie" told by the sergeant's wife of the captured police-barrack. The barrack was set on fire during the engagement, and the rebels made a momentary truce while the sergeant's wife and children were enabled to descend by a ladder from the burning building. She and my brother were old friends, and he took one of the squalling infants in his arms, and with some remnant of the pancakes with which he had stuffed his pockets the previous night soon stilled the youngster's troubles. Mrs. Browne was brought to the Bridewell to identify the prisoner as one of the attacking party. "Oh no!" she said, staring at my brother with blank innocence, "Mr. O'Brien wasn't there at all."

There being no evidence forthcoming, my brother was, after a short period of detention on suspicion, set free. In time to come the sergeant retired from the Force and settled down in business in Mallow, and when the gallant young rebel had lain for years in his grave, the memory of that morning was still sufficiently thrilling for Mrs. Browne to ensure for the young rebel's brother her husband's vote, when I became a candidate for the representation of Mallow.

Before I pass from the Rising of '67, two incidents deserve to be recorded. The first is that the rebel commander of that day in Ballyknockane is now

the honoured representative in Parliament of the City of Cork, Mr. James F. X. O'Brien.<sup>1</sup> He was then in the prime of life, and occupied one of the most enviable commercial positions in Cork city. Having no special office or responsibility in the conspiracy, he bade good-bye to his wife and children, and to his prospering career, and went out cheerfully that bleak March night to his doom, and finding thousands of brave men assembled on Prayer Hill without arms, or leaders, or any authoritative word why they had been brought there or what they were expected to do with their naked hands, he put himself at their head, and began the forlorn march towards the mythical army of the Galtees. But the circumstance I wish to accentuate here is that this man, who conducted himself like a hero and a chivalrous gentleman in the obscure skirmish at the police-barrack, who listened without a quaver while he was sentenced to be hanged and quartered and buried in the common jail, and afterwards went through years of penal servitude without a murmuring word, was one of those who, in brighter days, co-operated heart and soul with his old jailer, Mr. Gladstone, in his noble endeavour to strike up an enduring treaty of peace between the rebels and their antagonists of that night, and in doing so, it is not too much to say, displayed a more precious courage than he stood in need of under the police-

<sup>1</sup> Before this volume was finished my old friend and colleague had passed into the silent land.

men's bullets, or in presence of the hanging Judge's black cap.

The other circumstance is, I think, scarcely less interesting. Twenty years after the Rising, when our struggle with Mr. Balfour was at its fiercest heat, an Englishwoman of noble presence and still nobler heart, Lady Sandhurst, was one of a deputation of sympathetic English folk who attended a vast popular meeting in Mallow, to cry out against my treatment in the life-and-death conflict that was then raging between my jailers and myself within the walls of Tullamore Jail. Some months afterwards Lady Sandhurst was telling me of her Mallow meeting, and I related to her my experience of the day of the Rising, when from moment to moment I expected to see the first flash of the cannon, remarking how singular was the transformation of feeling which had brought English people to Mallow to champion me, where they had once been mustered to shoot down my brother. "Why," she said, "I was there myself that day. The General you saw standing beside the guns at the railway station was—my husband!"



## CHAPTER V

### THE CORK PRESS

1868-1874

ONE day in the beginning of 1867 word came to the school that my father's employer, Mr. Farmer, was dead, and leave was given to myself and to Mr. Farmer's sons, who were also pupils of Mr. Wright, to go home. Neither they nor I at all fully understood the meaning of the grave faces at home. With a curiously varied knowledge of books I combined an unfathomable ignorance of the world. I was destined never to return to school again.

It took my father some months to liquidate the business of the firm, during which everything seemed to go on as usual. After that, we began to realise dimly that a change had come over our affairs, but it was only in after years I really knew how gallantly my father stood four-square to all the winds; for he never dropped a dejected word before his children. He fought against ill-fortune stoutly, with a dozen different weapons. He became an Insurance agent; but the company stopped pay-

ment or fell into some such embarrassment. He turned auctioneer ; but rival auctioneers sprang up to dispute the humble booty. He was appointed to a champagne agency, and the first time I ever tasted that generous wine was on a Christmas night, when he opened a bottle out of his stock for sampling ; but Mallow did not offer a promising market for the sparkling gold liquor of France, which had to be purchased with gold of a more solid consistency. Then, by degrees, we began to note that rare old bits of furniture were disappearing ; that Tom Herlihy's weekly account of his adventures in search of arrears of rent were listened to with a more painful interest ; that the sale of squares of cabbage in the garden, and of the apple crop, began to be items of importance in the family budget. Once there was a judgment against us by the head landlord, and we were in daily expectation of a seizure by the sheriff. But even then, though we were sensible of a peculiar kindness to us on the part of the neighbours, as though there was somebody dead in the family, I grieve to say the circumstance gave us younger children less concern than it gave to the honest sheriff's officer himself (whose son was a conscript of my brother's "Circle"), and we never found the game of hide-and-seek so exhilarating as through the empty bedrooms and the shadowy depths of the garret under the slates. The sheriff did not arrive after all — by what methods disarmed or appeased, I know not — but

my father had to sell his interest in his house property for a song, and to depart for Cork city to begin the world again—with head still unbowed and without a murmuring word, but, as I now know, an altered and broken-hearted man.

It was then for the first time I learned from my mother's face, and from various little domestic pinchings, such as the disappearance of butter from our breakfast-table, that there was serious trouble in the house, and then also the thought first struck me that the scribblings and dreamings which had begun to occupy me night and day might, by some possibility, mean money, and be even as useful as Tom Herlihy's rents. This new delight of doing battle to kept the wolf from the door was, for me, the first suggestion of commercial value in association with writings from which I had as little hoped to derive actual coin of the realm as from my manuscript journal or my pasteboard army. During all these troubled times of the Rising and of the sheriff's visit, when there was scarcely a table left in the house whereon to scribble, the passion for scribbling something, and for dreaming of things I could not manage to put on paper, had become an obsession as to which I no longer seemed to have any choice. Although I had never met a newspaper man, nor laid my eyes on a newspaper office, nor received a suggestion on the subject from any human being, I was already a pressman by as sure a law of nature as that by which the sparks fly upwards. And now,



by a queer admixture of inborn impulse, family affection, and religious duty, it became a devouring purpose to force a way for my vocation and to make my pen a bread-winner. My persistency may be amusingly exemplified by an extract or two from a "Précis of Correspondence" which I kept from February 1st, 1868, being then little more than fifteen years old :—

*Feb. 1st.* Letter to R. Pigott, Esq.,<sup>1</sup> asking explanation of the reticence he has observed with regard to my stories, and threatening to withdraw my contributions if not satisfied with his answer. Imprudent perhaps, but nothing else for it.

*Feb. 3rd.* Letter to editor of *Nation*, enclosing a story, "The Traitor and the Betrayed," for publication in that journal, and advising additional space for literary papers.

*Feb. 9th.* Letter to Pigott, with undoubtedly my last appeal for his notice of my letters and price of story published.

*Feb. 17th.* To G. P. Warren,<sup>2</sup> publisher, offering for £80 my newly completed story "Blasted Hopes, or Irish Life in the Present."

*Feb. 19th.* From G. P. Warren declining my offer. At least he answered. Patience, they say, will carry a snail to Jerusalem.

*Feb. 19th.* Offering same to *Cork Weekly Herald*. I suppose they could not pay.

*Feb. 21st.* Offering same to James Duffy, Dublin. Most likely with same result.

*Feb. 23rd.* To John Mullany, publisher, enclosing for publication in the *Catholic Chronicle* some sketches of Irish

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<sup>1</sup> The hero and victim of the *Times*' Special Commission of 1888.

<sup>2</sup> A Dublin bookseller and publisher of small religious books, who must have opened his eyes wide at my impudent proposal.

History, romancified and brightened. Also starting a project for my appointment as Southern correspondent of that journal. I suppose nothing will come of it as usual, but *sic itur*, etc.

*Feb. 24th.* To editor of *Irishman*, inquiring what has happened. Now I can forgive poor Pigott for his neglect. Maybe my "Cormac O'Toole" will turn up under the new proprietor.<sup>1</sup>

*Feb. 25th.* A letter to editor of the *Nation*, enclosing for publication in that journal a satire entitled "John Bull's Poor Relation." It has point, and the editor is punctual, but I have my misgivings.

*Feb. 28th.* Very satisfactory news. From *Irishman* I hear that my stories have been only partially examined. The *Catholic Chronicle* has accepted my contributions, with thanks, and also my proposal to act as Southern reporter. This is good news indeed.

All this for one month. The "Précis," which extends over five years, exhibits equal activity month after month, until nearly every newspaper and publisher in Ireland, and afterwards a good many in London and America, had been plied and re-plied with manuscripts and literary proposals. The entries are mostly bald. The reader will be amused at the evidence of bumptious adolescence they betray (for I, who would colour scarlet on the slightest physical notice by the least of men, was a different person with a pen in my hand). The contributions were mostly, and most rightfully, rejected for the crude stuff they were.

These extracts are given here only because they

<sup>1</sup> I have no recollection what is referred to here; probably one of Pigott's innumerable financial breakdowns.

are life, and also, perhaps, in the hope that they may tend to fortify my young countrymen under our national temptation to turn aside from purposes once enthusiastically conceived, under the discouragements which weigh upon Irish life as depressingly as the winding-sheet of our Atlantic mists. As all this correspondence was carried on unknown to anybody in the house, the mere expenditure for postage stamps must have been a serious strain upon my meagre pocket-money.

When the note, "This is good news indeed," was made on February 28th, I was probably little aware that it marked a turning-point of my life. Upon that day, however, my destiny as a pressman was sealed for ever. The *Catholic Chronicle* was an ephemeral Dublin weekly, over whose grave, nevertheless, there is one person at least in the world who can drop a grateful tear. The first task I essayed as their Southern correspondent was a description of the trial of the romantic young Fenian leader, Captain Mackey. He was one of many scores of young Irishmen the study of whose lives made Isaac Butt a Nationalist and decided the later life of Mr. Gladstone. Young, brave, as worldly-unwise as you will, but a creature all compact of high enthusiasm, and as cheerfully ready for self-immolation as a Christian virgin in the arena of the Colosseum, for more than twelve months, while there was a price of £500 on his head, "the little Captain," as he was called, walked about the



streets of Cork as freely as though he wore the coat of darkness of Irish folk-lore. By day he spent long hours on his knees in the churches, and at night he was frequently engaged in one of those daring raids for arms which always captivate the popular imagination in Ireland. His adventures had all the stronger fascination for myself that my brother, in spite of all the disillusion of the Rising on Pancake Night, was one of "the little Captain's" favourite lieutenants in his midnight forays. One night they broke into a Martello tower at Fota; another night a hole was broken through the wall of the armoury of the North Cork Militia and a couple of hundred rifles carried off, with the ready connivance of the sentinels; still again, in broad daylight, half-a-dozen raiders walked into the largest gunshop in the principal street of the city and helped themselves to sackfuls of revolvers and rifles while the police were patrolling and the busy life of the city in full swing on the flags outside. "The little Captain's" unlucky hour came at last. He was captured, after a desperate struggle, in which a policeman was killed by a revolver shot, and he was put on trial for his life before Judge O'Hagan, who was afterwards Lord Chancellor of Ireland.

It was my first step into the rough world, and I am quite sure the prisoner in the dock was not consumed with apprehensions one half so miserable. A place in the court on so august an occasion, and

as a representative of the Press, seemed to be an ambition as audacious as that of a small urchin who should walk into a queen's palace to dine with Her Majesty. All the approaches to the court were blocked by policemen, hard and blunt as their own truncheons. I remember keenly with what trepidation I exhibited my letter of appointment from the *Catholic Chronicle* to a hectoring constable at the court door, and with what a sense of heavenly relief I passed on beyond the range of his awful eye and his blood-red whiskers. My terror of the reporters in the Press seats surpassed even my terror of the blood-red whiskers, for the latter represented to me mere tyranny, but the hauteur of the reporters represented divine right. I soon came to understand well enough the indignation with which the regular practitioners saw one of the very few seats available for them on a busy day occupied by a raw country boy representing some ridiculous weekly rag unknown. But for the time the stare with which one of the *gros bonnets* of the local reporting corps, named Archie M'Dermot (who afterwards turned out to be one of the heartiest of good fellows), gorgonised me through his eye-glass, made me blush and shiver with an uneasiness which has never since been altogether absent whenever I took my seat in a court of justice.

The result of the trial for wilful murder turned upon the answer of a head-constable Gale to the question whether the shot which killed the police-

man was the result of a deliberate aim, or of the clash of the head-constable's own revolver with that of Captain Mackey in the course of their struggle. To the credit of the Irish police, with whom I have had many a strenuous hour of conflict, but also a good many queerly sympathetic passages, the head-constable made the conscientious answer which saved "the little Captain's" life. It was on a charge of treason felony he was convicted on a second trial and sentenced to twelve years' penal servitude. I daresay if Mackey's speech from the dock were to be read now in a cold newspaper file, what I am going to say would seem to be an absurd extravagance; but having stumbled through the philippics of Demosthenes and Cicero as best I could in their own tongues, and having heard Gladstone, Bright, and Butt at their best, no eloquence I have ever read or listened to has come to me with so genuine a ring or so overpowering a pathos as the simple words in which "the little Captain"—a poorly-dressed, sallow, mechanic-looking youth, of whom you could only see the enthusiasm which suffused his face and all but etherealised him into a spirit—quietly reaffirmed his love of Ireland and bade a gentle farewell to his countrymen. He was himself almost the only person in court who did not break down while he was speaking. The very Judge had to produce his handkerchief again and again to wipe away the tears he could not restrain, and in the speech in



which he sentenced him to be chained for twelve years to the monsters of crime in English jails, said the prisoner's words were "worthy of a patriot and a Christian gentleman." Let me tell here the last scene in the tragedy of "the little Captain's" life. Fifteen years afterwards, when Ireland was in the throes of a desperate struggle against one of the innumerable Coercion Acts, Captain Mackey bade farewell to a happy home in Ohio to return to England as an emissary of the Dynamite Conspiracy. He and his brother hired a boat to explode a dynamite bomb under one of the buttresses of London Bridge early in the morning before there was any likelihood of a loss of life through the explosion. The explosion came off, with the result that the two dynamiters were themselves blown to atoms, and a few fragments of the boat were the only evidences that survived to tell the tale. If the whiff of dynamite about his fate stirs the English soul to horror, that last scene under London Bridge has a deeper moral if Englishmen would only set themselves to reflect what brought the "patriot and Christian gentleman" of Lord O'Hagan's speech to die the death of a dynamiter in the heart of England.

It may easily be conceived that it did not require much art to give a touching account of a scene which moved the very Judge to tears. A week or two after the trial I was returning through Prince's Street from the market, with a basket of potatoes

for our dinner, when I met Mr. David A. Nagle, proprietor of the *Cork Daily Herald*, and also one of the firm of Tracy and Nagle, solicitors, with whom my father had now found employment. Mr. Nagle, who was a remote relative of my mother, concealed a soft heart behind a gruff abruptness. "Good-morrow, boy," he growled. "Was it you did that thing about Mackey's trial?" My flushed face made the reply my lips could not. "Would you like to get on the paper?" Would the wretch sitting by the Pool of Bethesda like to see the angel descending to stir the waters? My eager eyes made a sufficiently plain answer. "Very well. Turn up at the *Herald* office to-morrow morning at eleven," and he was gone.

I turned out the basket of potatoes under my mother's eyes that morning with as much pride as if they were as many nuggets of gold I had brought home.

In these days, when everybody writes for the Press, and the mystery that once hung about a newspaper office has been completely dissipated by the light of common day, it would be impossible to give even a faint idea of the virgin raptures of my first relations with the Press. I approached the *Herald* office with the same awe with which I should have entered a sanctuary. The powers within were equally unknown, and only less deserving of reverence and wonder. The printing machine was a miracle-worker; the editor a veiled prophet to

whom I hardly dared to raise my eyes ; the cabalistic signs of shorthand (now as familiar as pothooks in every village school) were the privileged language of a mysterious brotherhood, who were everywhere without being visible, and enjoyed Ariel's gift "to fly, to swim, to dive into the fire, to ride on the curl'd clouds," in order to tickle the public every morning unobserved. I was taken aback to find the chief reporter, Mr. Barry, to whom I was handed over, tossing his first-born baby in his arms, like the common garden parent. Maybe, it was not immediately evident where the baby came in in this mysterious priesthood ; maybe, it did not seem altogether proper that so young a man should be a father and not even be ashamed of the fact ; but it took many months, if I should not say years, of realism in the least to take the bloom off the childish joy and reverence with which I worshipped in these secret crypts and chapels of the Press, with their bare walls and their ancient smell of oil and paste and rotting newspaper files, and their occult processes by which the page scribbled in my execrable handwriting came out from the black dungeons downstairs as a divine Mercury to fly "on the wings of the Press" through an entire province before breakfast.

In nothing has the status of the Press been more completely transformed within the last quarter of a century than in that of the reporters. To-day, they are highly paid and petted ; their table is recognised



as a more important part of a public gathering than the platform; they have shaken off all taint of Bohemianism; they have grown to be respected citizens and fathers of families; and, as the price of their material prosperity, have lost three-fourths of their charm and mystery for the public. As the Parisians say, they have "come on the Boulevards," far from the picturesque garrets of the Latin Quarter, ages away from the raggedness and *sans-gêne* of the Schaunards and the Mimi Pinsons of Murger's *Vie de Bohème*. Even in my first days of journalism there was a decided tendency towards the respectability of Archie M'Dermot's eye-glass and Mr. Barry's baby. But there was still left (until death swept them untimely away) a curious band of reckless, charming, wildly unconventional, and, I am sorry to say, hard-drinking pressmen, who were welcome everywhere, and were free to hobnob with judges, town councillors, or bishops, to walk into the most august assembly of grand jurors or priests or wedding guests, without anybody dreaming of making any remark as to the condition of their linen or their contempt for gloves. It was among this pleasant set, who were naturally the more indulgent to newcomers, that my lines principally fell, and perilous indeed was the cavern of delights they opened to me. By an eight o'clock train in the morning we would set out to attend some country Board of Guardians, where a rough-tongued democrat here and there was begin-

ning to beard the haughty *ex officio* Guardians, who had hitherto reigned as gods; or a Farmers' Club, who were timidly pleading for "the three F's" in days when a demand for the abolition of landlordism would have sounded like a demand for the abolition of the solar system; or, again, to a country race-meeting; or to pronounce our profound judgment on the beasts at a local cattle show, as to which I remember a learned wager between us once on the question whether the "shorthorns"—then famed on every agriculturist's tongue—were sheep or cattle. In the evening, we would reassemble to "do town." "Doing town" meant a series of calls to the Bridewell, the Morgue, the Infirmary, and the police-stations, and a general hovering round the resorts of men and the fountainheads of news late into the night. When this fly-by-night existence began for me, there were Fenian raids for arms or police descents on Fenian armouries every other week, and it was seldom safe to give over our nightly patrols before one or two o'clock in the morning. These long hours of waiting were passed in a pilgrimage from billiard-room to betting-club, from a late oyster-house to a still later drinking-saloon, where one was admitted by peculiar knocks and passwords at advanced hours of the morning.

It was a life of endless variety and adventure, and was the means of affording me such a knowledge as perhaps pressmen only can have of the seamy side of life, both in the upper world and in the

under world of a great city. But it was knowledge purchased at a dangerous price for a raw country lad—purchased, indeed, at the price of an early grave for a good many of my reckless contemporaries. One of them, whom I remember a merry dog before his comical up-tilted nose grew over-red, went from failure to failure, until he even failed in committing suicide. He hanged himself, and was cut down half-dead; he cut his throat so ill that the surgeons were able to save him; it was not until he put the muzzle of a revolver in his mouth and fired that he achieved his first—and last—success in a world where yet it was against himself alone he was a criminal. Another of these poor *vaincus de la vie* was to me a very much dearer friend, and his fate was all but as tragic. He was the show boy of his college, the pet of his professors, the envy of the parents of less brilliant striplings. He was a universal genius—an actor, a painter, a musician, an unrivalled entertainer. He could do almost everything—except earn his bread. His fall from this glittering youth, through the successive stages of a dissipated life and an unhappy marriage, down to the deepest depths of the begging letter-writer and the outcast, is perhaps the saddest of the woe-fully many tragedies to which the sunny and genial Irish nature, once deprived of some sustaining moral purpose, is peculiarly liable. His genius pursued him even into the begging letter-writing days. However savagely you vowed to read no more,



before you had got into the third sentence of his plea of Steerforth—"Think of me at my best," Steerforth had conquered as victoriously as in the old days on the stage of St. Colman's. Archbishop Croke, who was once his professor and to the end his benefactor, used to say, "Charley would coax the keys of heaven out of St. Peter." The last I heard of poor Charley was a scrawl on a dirty scrap of paper, on which some good-hearted pauper, who had attended him in his last illness in the workhouse of his native town, told me his last wish was that he should send me his blessing.

It was not in the least through any merit of my own I escaped the perils of these seductive days. It was very largely, though I hope not wholly, through the mere organic temperament, or whatever it may be called, which, up to a late hour of my life, made it impossible for me to swallow whiskey or brandy without grimacing, and associated the sound of billiard balls and the smell of tobacco smoke in my mind with a something physically objectionable and of evil omen. The consequence was that, while I enjoyed my experiences intensely as so many magical adventures in strange countries, the novelty in due time began to pall, and my own natural taste for seclusion, for books, for the dreams and activities of the intellect reasserted itself with an irresistible force. To the enforced omniscience of my Press life, however, I will always feel indebted for a peculiarly rich and varied knowledge of life, from

which my native timidity would have otherwise hopelessly debarred me. Of all the enticing privileges of the calling, that of free admission to the local theatre was that which left the deepest impression on my youth. If I could find mystery in the grimy machine-room of a newspaper office, the stage was an Olympian heaven. It would be idle to expect a precocious generation that knows every pulley in the mechanism of a pantomime to understand in the least the infatuation of these youthful ages of faith. One of the first scenes that dazzled my eyes was really an assembly of the gods—in an *opéra-bouffe* called, I think, *Ixion*. But, indeed, before the scene was half through, the banquet of the divinities and their glittering abode were all forgotten, and one figure alone filled the stage, and filled the whole heaven for me. It was a “Ganymede” in a pale lilac tunic, with large, beseeching eyes, and a voice with the soft sound of an Angelus bell—“Ganymede” being á young lady for a smile from whom the entire gilded youth of Cork were ready to die in arms. Even at this distance of time it seems an irreverence to say a word in the public hearing of a passion which was as true and deep and sacred as any “Pitifull Hystory” of Capulet’s garden. Night by night I was content to sit there in the stalls, like a burning candle before her altar, equally ardent and equally mute. In my newspaper notices I am afraid I was as apt as elsewhere to forget that there was any other figure occupying the stage.

I daresay the good-natured Manager early saw how the land lay, for, although it would have seemed to me a presumption, if not a blasphemy, to ask for an introduction, he one night laughingly introduced me as "the young fool we cannot get to see anything in this theatre except your eyes." She fastened those formidable eyes upon me with a smile of amused kindness, with the remark "How jolly!" I could not answer a word, but if I had spoken Sapphic odes to her, my reward could not have seemed richer. We had only met three times—meetings full of raptures on the one side and of wonderful if somewhat sceptical good-nature on the other—when, greatly daring, I asked her to marry me. I was at the time of the mature age of sixteen years and three months. Whether it is that she found in my boyish devotion a something more genuinely savouring of true love than the bouquets and flatteries of my numerous rivals, I know not, but she seemed to hesitate for some time, and made no answer.

Then a terrible blow fell. My father died suddenly of heart disease in a Turkish bath. Before the message from the baths could summon us to his side, he had ceased to live. A week or two previously, in a moment of depression, he had remarked to my mother, "It will be a good job for the children when I am dead," evidently making allusion to two policies of insurance to the amount of above £2000 which he had made on his life.



But he, who had once been one of the most systematic of business men, was too reserved to say more, and left us no indication of the state of his affairs. We had no money to pay the lawyers to bring the holders of the policies to an account, and the fund on which he had fondly counted as a provision for his children never produced a shilling. Misfortune seldom rains but it pours. My brother had just thrown up his position in a brewery to take part in a demonstration in honour of the Manchester Martyrs, in defiance of the veto of his employers, and the livelihood of the entire household now hung by the thread of my own slender salary. To me, revolving a hundred projects and bombarding newspapers and publishers with unconquerable manuscripts, the addition of one more to a family circle of six seemed the smallest of the difficulties of the situation. Her own practical good sense and less heated feelings, however, guided her to a saner decision.

For seventeen years after, while I saw her or heard of her no more, there was a secret chamber of my heart where, as Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations* preserved her untasted wedding feast, I enshrined with a certain mournful piety the faded flowers and sweetmeats of our brief idyll. One day in 1885 I received a black-bordered letter from her in the House of Commons, asking if I was the same William O'Brien of the Cork Theatre long ago. I found that she had been twice happily married, and

was the mother of a charming family. We found also that we had drifted asunder, far as the North Pole is from the South, in all our ways and sympathies, and that in all the frigid distances between, our only common country was the sun-bright memory of our three meetings in the Cork of long ago—

When all the world and love was young,  
And truth on every shepherd's tongue.

In that brief tract of youth, at all events, there grew no thorns and there rested no cloud. We could both look back on the Olympian heaven with a certain evening tenderness and calm.

## CHAPTER VI

### MY FIRST WORD AND LAST ON IRISH AFFAIRS

1870-1874

*Dec. 20th, 1870.* A letter to the *Daily News* on England's Opportunity in Ireland. If I only had a name that would make it worth their while to print it! It is my first word in Irish politics. Who can tell where to-day's beginning will end? Most likely in a prison or an early grave, as such things generally do in Ireland. I am tossed about between two half-beliefs—one, that I could be of some public use; and the other, that I am an idiot to trust to such fancies. All the same, I know I am right in this, if anybody would only listen!

The *Daily News* *did* print it. A few entries lower down in my note-book comes the following:—

*Jan. 2nd.* Prodigious! Letter appears in *Daily News*, double-leaded under heading "An Irish Rebel's View of the Irish Situation." It has been copied by the Irish papers, and is the talk of Rebel Cork. Jim guessed, and in his Rebel way approves, but laughs at the notion that England will listen to anything in Ireland, except chapel-bells.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In allusion to Mr. Gladstone's famous confession that the intensity of Fenianism had acted as a chapel-bell to rouse the conscience of England to "the vast importance of the Irish controversy."



The Three Judges of the Parnell Commission of 1888 in their wisdom reported that I, with eleven others named, joined the Land League movement "with the intention by its means to bring about the absolute independence of Ireland as a separate nation." The Land League movement, no doubt, was in the nature of a "chapel-bell," and my brother was right in anticipating that England would attend to nothing from Ireland until its tocsin rang in her ears. But there is, perhaps, no better way of showing how ludicrously the three worthy English Judges blundered in their appreciation of Irish affairs, when they concluded that I had started out in life as an irreconcilable enemy of England, than to reprint this first declaration of my political creed, written from the very hotbed of Irish disaffection, and at an age (a month or two more than seventeen) when there was not much temptation to make any Machiavelian disguise of my feelings. Lengthy as the letter is, it had better be given in its entirety, lest there should be any suspicion that the general sense was altered by the passages omitted.

*Saturday, 31st Dec. 1870.*

#### AN IRISH REBEL'S VIEW OF IRISH POLITICS

To the Editor of the *Daily News*.

Sir—If I venture to address to you a few observations relating to Ireland, which are at variance with your ideas and possibly distasteful to you, it is in the confidence that, through your columns, I convey myself to the mass of those

English Liberals who have proved themselves equal to the duty of approaching Irish questions from an Irish point of view. I do not claim your indulgence as the spokesman of any particular section of my countrymen, but rather as the echo of convictions which are, I believe, steadily gaining ground among all classes of thinking Irishmen.

You will agree with me, Sir, that the present moment is a most opportune one for the revision of the relations between Great Britain and Ireland. On the part of Ireland, the advance of Liberal opinion in England—the unequivocal change for the better in the Government—the eradication of two monstrous anomalies—and finally the great act of justice, which has preached oblivion of the past—all these have contributed, with a livelier intercourse between the peoples, to clear away many ancient prejudices, and enable men to examine their position in a mood of calmness and conciliation. On the part of England, the late astounding events on the Continent, the gathering cloud of hostility and danger from abroad, the powerlessness of her friends and the mightiness of her enemies, have disposed her perhaps, more anxiously than ever before, to enlist in her alliance by a real union, a people whose enmity is an undying danger, but whose friendship would give her a colossal strength. The opportunity is propitious. One month, nay, one week, might plunge England in a death-struggle. Will any sane man say that she could afford to have a nation of deadly foes in her very bosom? And that she will have such foes, should her relations with Ireland remain unchanged, permit me, Sir, to record my solemn conviction. It is worse than idle, it is mischievous, to say that the measure of English justice to Ireland is complete. If it is, then sooner or later nothing can avert a death-struggle between the two nations. But as a believer in the possibility of a real union between the countries, I rejoice to think that the work of English Justice to Ireland has only been inaugurated. In sweeping away the past, with

its bitter memories, Mr. Gladstone has done well. Let him now complete his task by provision for the future. On the nature of that provision, the happiness, perhaps the existence, of the two nations infallibly depends. The time for the new treaty, of which Mr. Bright has spoken, is come. A short time, and the opportunity may have passed away for ever. The crisis is, in my judgment, a turning-point in England's domestic history. It is in no spirit of factious braggadocio I would earnestly appeal to the patriotism and enlightenment of Englishmen, beseeching them to approach the consideration of the Irish question with all the moderation they are capable of. It will be said, speciously enough, that it is rather hard to ask Englishmen to confront a new Irish difficulty, when they had been led to believe that the concessions on the Land and Church questions had settled it for ever.

But who led them to any such belief? Assuredly not the Irish people, whose aspirations for national liberty have never yet been relinquished in the darkest hour of their tribulation, and least of all at a time like the present, when their numbers and their spirit constitute them a distinct power in the world. True, they have accepted the disestablishment of the Church with gratitude, so with the Land Bill, so, emphatically, with the political amnesty, such as it is. But they accepted them solely as steps towards one greater concession for which they have yearned, and which they have never compromised their right to, the privilege, namely, of self-government. It is the worst and most fatal of delusions to imagine that any large body of Irishmen are at the present moment loyal at their hearts to England. Again I appeal to Englishmen not to wilfully shut their eyes to the all-pervading conviction among Irishmen. It is needless to mince the issue—the Irish nation is at this moment in the balance between independent union with England or an independent republic without it. Heaven only knows on what little provocation the weight might incline to the more desperate side. It will not be



necessary for me, Sir, I apprehend, to pile up evidence of this fact to satisfy anybody acquainted with genuine Irish feeling. Such evidence must lie in abundance in the hands of the officers of the Crown in this country. It will be no news to the authorities in Dublin Castle to learn that the active machinery of disloyalty is in full activity, and that, step by step, the entire middle, as well as the lower and farmer classes, have notoriously thrown themselves in with the popular cause,—that in fact, disloyalty, in one shape or other, has become the creed of nine-tenths of the population. My assertion may seem strange to people removed from the influences which have made “Irishman” and “Nationalist” synonymous, but, believe me, Sir, it will not be seriously questioned by those who are charged with observing the tone of opinion in Ireland. No one will admit more readily than I that British power may again succeed in trampling down active sedition—that over and over again Irishmen may be flung into the cells now vacated by the “Fenians”—that the old, old tragedy of unsuccessful revolution may be repeated *ad infinitum*. But be assured the suffering will only consecrate and strengthen the Cause, until one day or other, some resistless Conquerors of Europe or the mighty power of America will swoop down to effectuate the work which Irish disloyalty has commenced. History should totally rearrange her probabilities were it otherwise. To avert a future so big with ruin and despair to both nations would be a task to immortalise a statesman. I am very much mistaken if the statesman is not there as well as the opportunity. Let there be no mistake. Irishmen have no fancy for inaugurating scenes of bloodshed and misery, which can at best only leave their country a hideous charnel-house and a plague-spot among the nations. At the present time, especially, they are amenable to any sensible national arrangement that would obviate so dire a calamity. But, come weal, come woe, they will accept all the consequences if they be not speedily won over to

an equality of independence. What the basis and terms of that equality should be, I cannot here discuss, but I am persuaded that a conference of a few of the leading men of both nations would result in such a compromise as would for ever cement the connection of those countries, and re-establish them in the position of a European great power. What the consequent mutual advantages would be it is needless to recount. I only speak of public policy. Once more, Sir, I have to plead, in extenuation of the length of this letter, the importance of its subject. You will appreciate it the more when I say that I write from a city that glories in the name of "Rebel"—in the midst of a population of 80,000, 60,000 of whom at least are actively or passively disloyal. They are yet open to honourable conciliation. Who can tell how long they will remain so?—I have the honour to remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

A CORK REBEL.

However jejune may be its phraseology, this boyish manifesto, the first I ever penned, contains the substance of the political creed of my life. I should not greatly care to alter a comma in it, after thirty years for reconsideration.

Speaking in the Dublin City Hall, on August 9th, 1902, on the occasion of King Edward's Coronation, I repeated all but *verbatim* what I had written in the *Daily News* thirty-two years before:—

I have done my part, and will be neither afraid nor ashamed to do my part again, for hearty peace between these two countries. . . . I should be very sorry to say anything personally unkind in reference to the King himself, but I hold that it is in the highest sense the constitutional duty of the representatives of Ireland to warn His Majesty, and to warn all whom it may concern, that the rejection of Home Rule by England, so far from

disposing of Home Rule, has brought about such a state of feeling among the Irish race that those racial passions which Gladstone and Parnell would have set at rest are again free to take possession of the young men of Ireland, and that in point of fact, for many of the younger generation who are growing up in Ireland to-day, it is no longer a question between English Rule and Home Rule, but it is a question between Home Rule and an Irish Republic.

In 1902 as in 1870, the message to England, "Friends, if you will let us; Rebels, if you will drive us," is a fair summary of my frame of mind, and so will continue to be "from the morning watch even unto the night."

If few public men can repeat their own early opinions without revision thirty years after, the credit is not to be attributed to any specially meritorious consistency on my part so much as to the fact that there are certain root-principles of Irish life which are as unchangeable as the law of gravitation, and that every change which has taken place since the *Daily News* printed the letter of "A Cork Rebel" has been a change tending to justify and confirm those principles rather than to displace them. Every Act of Parliament since passed for Ireland is an endorsement of them, and a rebuke to the prejudices and calumnies which obstructed them. In every conflict of opinion, it is Ireland which has proved to be wholly right, and her governors to be wholly wrong. It is surely a humiliating comment on the capacity of the



English Parliament to govern Ireland, that an Irish lad of seventeen should have been able to foresee Gladstone's possibilities as a conciliator of Ireland fifteen years before he introduced his Home Rule Bill, and to foresee a National Conference as the best means of conciliating the interests of the two races thirty-one years before the Land Conference at whose hands the English Parliament accepted (though with some unlucky reserves) a revolutionary resettlement of the land of Ireland. The "Policy of Conciliation" was my first dream, as it is my last aim, in public life.

The principal reason, however, for which the letter to the *Daily News* is here cited, is to show how fundamentally three English Judges, after more than a year's conscientious study of the evidence, misunderstood the Irishmen they were dealing with. The thirty years since 1870, which might have already knit the two countries together in the bonds of a happy wedlock, have been consumed in a Thirty Years' War between the two races. If the Irish nation, at the end as at the beginning, "is in the balance between an Independent Union with England or an Independent Republic without her," it is not, as The Three Judges suggested, through any incorrigible National conspiracy on our part to remain irreconcilable, but through the masterful English determination to reject the wisdom in relation to Ireland which even Irish schoolboys can teach them, and to drive generation after generation

of friendly Irishmen to the conclusion that England's attention is not to be won by words of peace, but by the clang of the revolutionary "chapel-bell."

Mr. J. F. X. O'Brien's case furnishes us with an admirable exemplification of how Irishmen regard these matters. He was one of the political prisoners released from penal servitude shortly before my letter to the *Daily News* was written. My first sight of him was at a public banquet in his honour. Except that he sat upright, he might have been a corpse assisting at his own "wake." His bones were barely covered with the tightly-stretched skin of a skeleton that had long lain bleaching on the desert sands. His eyes had the unearthly Dantesque hollowness of "the man who has been in hell." He had never felt a repentant pang for all he had risked and suffered. He had come out of penal servitude precisely as he would have stood upon the gallows if the extreme sentence had been carried out—happy in the deep tranquillity of an unchangeable faith. But, far from indulging any grudge of his own against England, he was ready to sacrifice as much thenceforth for peace as he had sacrificed for war. When Butt's Federal movement promised to unite Irish classes, and creeds, in paving the way for a friendly compromise with England, he displayed even more moral courage in insisting upon a fair field for the new movement, and putting down the clamour of fanatical physical-force men, than he had done under the bullets of the policemen

or before the black cap of Judge Keogh. I had the privilege of standing by his side one day in the Cork Park, when three-fourths of the young hot-heads of the city "Circles" broke into revolt and attempted by main force to storm the platform of a Home Rule meeting. He held the platform, and put the hot-heads firmly down.

But here comes in the seeming inconsistency which puzzled The Three Judges in the character of Irish public men, but which is in reality the key to the deepest truth in Irish affairs; for while Mr. J. F. X. O'Brien was risking his popularity with the more violent spirits in his own ranks by forcing them to give fair-play to a constitutional public movement for a friendly compromise with England, he was at the same time so convinced of the impossibility of arresting England's attention by conciliatory appeals alone, that he all the time persisted calmly in his preparations for the *ultima ratio* of armed rebellion. Fresh from the *Malebolge* of penal servitude, he risked liberty and home and a station of honour and comfort again to import arms and reform the shattered "Circles" in the belief that the presence in the background of determined men, hungering for peace, but prepared for any extent of self-immolation, was the best guarantee both for the purity of a Parliamentary movement and for the possibility of getting England to give any heed to their demands. His attitude of "Friends, if you will; Rebels, if we



must" was that adopted by almost all the men who had been the most formidable in the fighting days of Fenianism, and the most heroic in bearing the penalties. In after years, "the Fenian men" became the pivot men of Parnell's battalions and the most reliable of his Parliamentary lieutenants. If properly regarded, the adhesion of such men to a policy of friendly compromise was a consummation worth more to England than one of her most victorious battles, or one of her most opulent dependencies. It is surely one of the strangest freaks of the intellectual cross-purposes at which the two races have been playing for ages that we who considered it our best credential that we spoke for Fenianism in all its intensity and sincerity, when we bore the olive-branch to England, should have heard our Fenian connections denounced as our most unpardonable crime, for many years, in the House of Commons and in the columns of the *Times*, and that The Three Judges should solemnly conclude that we "intended to bring about the absolute independence of Ireland as a separate nation," because we succeeded in bringing the most fiery advocates of absolute independence to the ways of friendly alliance and conciliation.

But the days were still distant when Irish Nationalists could place even a limited trust either in Irish Parliamentary agitators or in English statesmen. Mr. Gladstone's Land Act of 1870 was a daring feat for a British Prime Minister. Lord

Lansdowne resigned, and the Duke of Argyll mumbled threats of resignation, rather than have a hand in it. It was the first legal recognition of a divided ownership between landlord and tenant, and, by that fact alone, was the commencement of a revolution. But, as a piece of Parliamentary workmanship, the Act was a lamentable monument of English ineptitude in Irish affairs. It would not have been passed at all, only that a group of Tipperary peasants fired on an evicting party at Ballycohey, and discharged a shower of leaden pellets into the evicting landlord's face. Ballycohey convinced the most hide-bound English legislators that eviction was a very desperate business in the eyes of an Irish peasant; but the best remedy the English Parliament could devise was to inflict a small pecuniary fine upon the evictor, while leaving him at perfect liberty to indemnify himself by increasing the rents on the tenant's improvement to any figure the helpless tenant or some envious neighbour could be got to pay. The consequence of this excellently-intended ameliorative legislation was that, within a few years after the passing of the Act, it was my fortune to visit scores of estates, where there was a general revaluation by some emissary of the landlord, a merciless raising of rents, which were enforced by processes of eviction, and in consequence a state of public feeling in which the agent found it prudent to wear a bullet-proof shirt and to walk about with a loaded rifle. At one period

I had to visit Tipperary so frequently in connection with affrays like that of Ballycohey, that the old waiter at Dobbyn's Hotel used to greet a new visit with—"Glory be to God, sir, who's kilt now?"

The Irish members of the time were, with the exception of three or four single-minded and able men like Mr. George Henry Moore, Mr. John Francis Maguire of Cork, and Sir John Gray, a sorry lot. In the witty words of one of them, "Those of my colleagues whom you won't find dishonest, you will find drunk." A few of them were willing to play the extreme patriot, in order to retain their seats until they could dispose of them to the Government Whips for some fifth-rate office. The story is told of one among them, a lawyer, who responded to a deputation of his Fenian constituents complaining of his milk-and-watery performances—"Gentlemen, I am quite ready to raise the Green Flag on the hillside when you please; but don't you think it would be bad strategy to name the day—just yet?" For the Parliamentary agitation represented by such men, the young men who risked their lives and liberties in the Rising without a pang entertained a mingled feeling of ferocity and contempt which it took many years of honest moderation to eradicate, and which, indeed, would never have been eradicated at all, only that those who strove to wed the moral-force and physical-force elements together for high and magnanimous national purposes had to prove their



sincerity by undergoing imprisonment, calumny, and death as freely as if they were fighting with arms in their hands.

Sometimes the popular contempt for "constitutional agitation" took the form of the forcible breaking-up of the agitators' public meetings. One of these scenes—it was in the Corn Market of Limerick—I remember vividly. It was to be a Land meeting, and the Amnesty question was thrown in to disarm the extremists. Upon the morning of the meeting, the Corn Market was taken possession of by a couple of thousand stalwart young fellows, one battalion of whom was drawn up at the entrance gate, and the rest in double ranks kept open a passage to a gateway at the opposite end of the market. When the Members of Parliament and the ecclesiastical dignitaries who were to ornament the platform arrived, they were taken bodily possession of by the battalion of young men at the entrance, forced willy-nilly to march on between the double lines of sentinels, and, to their speechless indignation, bowed courteously but firmly out at the opposite gateway. "The Knight of Glynn," as the boys nicknamed Sir John Gray (in allusion to the Government Whip to whom he was supposed to have owed his title), was, I think, never afterwards seen on a public platform.

On other occasions, it was thought the best way of pouring scorn and contempt on the Parliamentary patriots and on the Westminster Ichabod to elect

to Parliament somebody whose very name would be a short summary of Irish hatred and defiance. The first time I visited the magnificent county of Tipperary, and made acquaintance with its brawny men, was in 1869, when O'Donovan Rossa was, to the horror of all Sunday citizens, run for the representation of the county. At this time of day, when popular feeling can indulge its extremest fancy with so little risk, it is difficult to estimate the daring of O'Donovan Rossa's nominators, or the open-mouthed amazement of the respectable, jog-trot Irish, not to say English, politicians. The white terror aroused by the Rising, the attack on Chester Castle, the Manchester Rescue, and the raid of the Irish-American ship *Jacmel*, was still at its height, and made the ruling powers capable of any arbitrary cruelty. For years, popular feeling had not dared to speak above its breath, without hearing the handcuffs and the keys of a penal cell jingling in its ears. O'Donovan Rossa himself, when he was nominated for Parliament, was lying under sentence of penal servitude for life. For a revolt against the prison rules his hands were chained behind his back, and for thirty-three days he was obliged to lap up his food with his tongue like a dog. The canvassing had to be done secretly, by bands of men sweeping through the country by night. The unknown leaders were so penniless that, by a stroke of unscrupulous Tory diplomacy not unusual in those days, the funds to pay the sheriff's election

expenses had to be procured from a Tory country gentleman, who was doubtless reimbursed from the exchequer of the Carlton Club. The rival candidate, Serjeant Heron—a respectable Whig lawyer, best remembered by those who have heard the chimes at midnight at the mess dinners of the Munster Bar—was supported by the priests with all their might, and quite took it for granted he had bamboozled the simple electorate in the historic place-hunting style by wearing a flaming green necktie on the hustings in Clonmel. Up to the eve of the polling, many believed the candidature of the Fenian convict to be a clumsy joke. That the sober-sided farmers of rich Tipperary should face the anger of their priests, and the terrors of a time when even an incautious word was treason, and carried its penalties, to side openly with the caged and beaten arch-revolutionist, seemed even to myself the wildest of infatuations on the part of the grim men of stern and smileless faces who sat around the midnight council-board at Hogan's Hotel in Tipperary town.

"Will the people come in at all?" some of the gloomier spirits asked, when "the General and his flying column" (as the corps of nocturnal canvassers were called) compared notes after their final reconnaissance the night before the polling. "Will they have the courage to come in at all?" "Oh, ye of little faith, the priests will bring them!" was the reply of "the General," with a roguish twinkle



behind his eye-glass. So, indeed, it turned out. The farmers, who might have shrunk from coming in individually to make an open profession of rebellion, were mustered in long processions by the priests, under escorts of Lancers, to vote for the Whig candidate of the green necktie. They were met outside the town by bands of enthusiastic men, at whose signal the voters jumped off the cars, and with a whoop proceeded to the polling-booth to give their votes for O'Donovan Rossa, while the procession of empty cars, with their escorts of Lancers, were left to make their foolish entry through the jeering crowd; and when the poll closed for the Tipperary polling-district, only ten votes had been recorded for the Government candidate in the green cravat, while all the rest were given for the convict, who was that evening forced to consume his supper while his hands were strapped behind his back in an English convict station.

The humorous incidents which to some extent relieve the deep tragedy of Irish life were not wanting from the Tipperary election.

Here is my note of a droll episode :—

*June 8th.* Returned at 2.30 A.M. with the Flying Column, after covering the country between Cappawhite and Aherlow Glen. While we were at supper, there came a tremendous rapping and shouting in the street. It was John —, the Chairman of the Town Commissioners, in his night-shirt, shouting, "General, General, for the love of God, open the door! The Peelers are searching the house, and I had barely time to fly through the stable with the

*traps!*" The traps were twelve or fourteen rusty rifles, which he carried in his arms. How the Peelers did not hear the shouting, God knows; it was enough to wake the dead. The Chairman of the Town Commissioners, all but stark-naked, and with his armful of rifles, looked very funny. He had to swallow tumblers full of whiskey, or he would have had his death of cold.

"The General" was himself one of the oddest figures in the Tipperary of those days. Peter Gill, both as a journalist and an orator, was for many years the principal articulate protector of the Tipperary tenantry, a loaded blunderbuss being their only other resource when "Pether's" eloquence failed. His fearless paper, the *Advocate*, was subject to occasional mysterious disappearances, on which occasions a printed slip was circulated among the subscribers: "In consequence of the absence of the proprietor on important political business, the *Advocate* will not appear this evening." The "absence on important political business" was sometimes occasioned by his arrest for debt, and at other times by the failure to beat up sufficient resources to pay "the Staff." Not, indeed, that "the Staff" were in the least exacting. They mostly lived on the premises with "the General," in a queer communist promiscuity of goods and victuals. Whenever the larder was wholly empty, they put their heads together as to how to fill the deficit, and if the paper-merchant was inexorable, or the necessary postage-stamps not to be had, philosophically adjourned the publication

until better times. "Pether's" addresses to the electors of Tipperary were more than once dated from the County jail. His detractors used to hint that there was "an unalterable figure" at which his election addresses were withdrawn and the opposing candidate admitted without a contest. The reproach, were it even well founded, would not be too heinous in times when Parliamentaryism was the synonym of corrupt self-seeking, and when "Pether" might well have considered himself as doing a national service by keeping the *Advocate* going at the expense of some hypocritical place-hunter.

"The General's" voice was, however, a more potent instrument than his pen. He had an inexhaustable fund of rich natural eloquence, set off by a mellow voice, a mouth capable of the drollest by-play, a rolling eye, and an eye-glass which he at one moment thrust into his mouth and sucked as if it were a lollipop, and the next moment fixed under his eyebrow arch during his speeches, convulsing his crowd now with a variety of humorous jerks and winks, and again appalling his enemies with the glare of a basilisk. When "Pether" got up to speak "on behalf of a hundred thousand personal friends in Tipperary," his boast was not a serious exaggeration. His humour and richness of imagination gave him a special distinction among the men of Tipperary, whose gifts generally go in the direction of straight-ahead action and deadly earnest rather than of flowery speech, and he repaid his



admiring county with a passionate admiration of his own. "They tell me," I once heard him roll out in his mellifluous tones over a Tipperary crowd—"they tell me, 'Pether, you are getting on in years; isn't there a nice girl anywhere around in Nenagh that would warm the heart of the poor old "Advocate"?' Gentlemen," said "Pether," erecting the eye-glass and glancing over the crowd in all his majesty, "my bride was Tipperary, and we spent the honeymoon on the slopes of Slieve-na-mon."<sup>1</sup> His stream of sparkling native eloquence was un-failing. Once Mr. George Henry Moore, M.P., missed the morning train for a great meeting at Thurles, and the next train would not arrive for three hours. The General was put up to fill the gap, and hour after hour kept the multitude in alternate roars of indignation and laughter, as he lashed out at some local tyrants with weapons of passion and ridicule that never failed. Suddenly a priest, with his eye on his watch, called out to him, "It's all right, Pether; you may wind up." "Gentlemen," pursued the orator, "I have detained you too long" (cries of "No, no!"); "you must blame the murdering tyrants of Tipperary if in the indignation of an honest Irish heart I have had to stand so long between you and our illustrious countryman, George Henry Moore, whom I know you are dying to lay your eyes upon." There was a great shout

<sup>1</sup> A beautiful mountain in the south of the county, made famous by a "monster meeting" at which "Pether" was a conspicuous figure.

from his enraptured audience. "Go on, Pether, go on—there isn't a better man of them all than yourself."

"Mick," said the General, fixing his eye-glass on a man in the crowd who had spoken, "that's as big a fib as I could tell myself. And now, fellow-countrymen," he proceeded, the drollery of the situation completely overcoming him, "will I tell you a bit of a secret? 'Tisn't to Mick Carroll nor you I've been talking these last two hours and a half, but running a race with a railway train; and by the same token," he cried, as a railway whistle sounded close at hand, "here comes the train and George Henry Moore in it! Would you ask for a finer peroration, if 'twas Edmund Burke himself that was addressing you?"

If it was deeper men than the General who were the real driving force in affairs like the Rossa election—men who, whenever there was not a crowd to be entertained, dismissed the General with a curl of the lip as a mountebank and buffoon—his roguish eye and rollicking eloquence offered, at least, some relief to the gloom of a struggle so constantly beset with disappointment and suffering, and constituted a peculiarly Irish element of geniality for which one might search in vain in the Revolutions of any other race.

Similar incidents marked the election of Mr. John Mitchel for the same constituency a few years afterwards. The Mitchel election is principally memorable to myself because—(1) it marked my first

(and last) meeting with that great Irishman himself; (2) it first made me acquainted with Mr. John Dillon; and (3) it was the occasion of my first public speech, or speechlet. My first glimpse of Mr. John Dillon, with whom I was destined to be associated for many eventful years, was at an election meeting in Roscrea, at which the Mitchel campaign began. His great height looked all the vaster for his thin and wasted limbs, upon which the languor of death seemed to be fastening. His soft, dark eyes, slowly waking up to a perception of the persons introduced to him, and the things they said, somehow gave me the impression that they had already gone far on the road to unconsciousness, and found some difficulty in returning to life from behind the heavy eyelids. His white and still face on a background of black hair of singular intensity might well indeed have seemed to be a face in a black coffin, if it were not for a tinge of rich Spanish colour about the handsome features, and the light of vivid Apostolic passion that flamed in his eyes, once they were kindled to their work. It was, I think, one of the young medical student's first public speeches, and made up by its earnest ring for the difficulty which he found in sustaining his voice or even his limbs during its delivery.

My own first words in public were spoken a few nights after in Cashel. My only part in the campaign was that of a newspaper man; but there being no speaker available except Mr. C. G. Doran



(a builder and engineer who, throughout the Mitchel campaign, and throughout his self-sacrificing life, has been one of the foundation-stones of Irish National resistance, all the more powerful, like the foundation-stones, for being buried out of sight), he besought me to come to the rescue and dragged me to the window. I said very little—I don't in the least know what ; but, whether it was the darkness, the wild Tipperary whoop of the crowd, or mere desperation that nerved me, I felt a rush of hot words blowing like a tropic wind across my brain, and when the hot blast was over, I heard the crowd crying out for me again, but with some difficulty, as they did not even know my name. My facility of speech was only an accident, and a momentary one, however. The next day, Mr. Doran, inspirited by my little success in Cashel, dragged me to the front again at Fethard. But this time there was no friendly darkness. The eyes of the crowd flashed on me with the devouring terror of a den of lions : merely to hear my name announced, covered my face with crimson, and paralysed my tongue and brain, and—I was not heard in public again during the Mitchel campaign, nor for many a year after.

Mitchel was returned for Tipperary in his absence in the United States, and even if, after the oblivious antidote of a quarter of a century, the Government had not meanly recollected he was an unpardoned political prisoner, in order to disqualify him for a seat in Parliament, it is certain he would never have

presented himself at Westminster, except to deliver some message of defiance, fulgurant as the magnificent prose cannonade with which he had shaken the towers of Dublin Castle to their base in '48. The people who sent him to the House of Parliament, indeed, demanded nothing better of their representative than that he should go there to break its windows—if he could do it no more serious structural damage. Whatever was the design with which Mitchel returned to Ireland from his long exile, he really came back to die. When I saw him on the Atlantic liner in the Cove of Cork, from which he had sailed away twenty-six years before in a convict ship, there was little of him except his indomitable will alive. When there was question of his writing an address of thanks to the electors of Tipperary he was gasping for breath, and whispered—"Let one of you boys scribble something." I had the privilege of scribbling the "something" myself, and did so with the ecstatic reverence of a young Levite admitted behind the Veil. "Yes," said Mitchel, with a smile, "that will fill the bill. They would have transported you for it in my day."

But, feeble though he was, he would see the rich plains of Tipperary for himself, and its gallant men. The evening of his arrival at the Limerick Junction there was a scene of volcanic enthusiasm more like the outburst of a Revolution than the sequel of a Parliamentary election. In the excitement, the crowd first seized upon the wrong man. An old

gentleman unknown was taken hold of arms and legs by the sons of Anak of a district pre-eminent for physical manhood, and hoisted on their shoulders, and grasped by both hands in iron grips until he roared for agony. When the mistake was discovered, the unfortunate stranger paid for his fugitive fame by being dropped half-dead on the platform as unceremoniously as he had been caught up. Let the reader judge what was Mitchel's fate in the hug of those adoring bears within the next few days of speeches, torchlight processions, and general tearing of limb from limb.

Mitchel was undoubtedly, if ever man was, killed by the kindness of Tipperary; but it was the death of all others he would have coveted. It was a magnificent vindication by another generation of men of the Cause to which he had immolated his youth and his fine talents with the stoicism of an old Roman. He, so to say, died on the old battlefield, which was not yet lost; and he did not in the least object if the event was hastened by the wild cheers and the hot blood of Tipperary. A week after the Tipperary visit he was dead in his father's house in Newry. Among those who stood by his open grave at the funeral was his brother-in-law, Mr. John Martin of Loughorne, who was the beloved Patroclus of his days of combat, and was not to be separated from him in death. Martin, with the gentleness of a saint, had a soul as incapable of knowing fear as Mitchel's own. He deliberately



put his hand into the fire of England's wrath in which he had seen Mitchel's burn away before him in the seismic days of '48. As he followed him to transportation in Tasmania, so he followed him on the last great journey. Standing bareheaded over his friend's coffin in the Newry graveyard, Martin caught a cold from which he died, and, little more than a week after, another grave was opened to receive Mitchel's old comrade in arms. "In death they were not divided."





Isaac Butt

*Emery Walker Photo*



## CHAPTER VII

### PHYSICAL FORCE AND MORAL FORCE

1870-1874

THE hopes of a friendly treaty between the two countries adumbrated in the letter to the *Daily News* were not destined to an early fulfilment. For a number of years I was cured of any desire to meddle in public affairs by my own experiences of the futility of secret conspiracy, of the insincerity of Parliamentary agitation, as it was then conducted, and the total insensibility of England to the Irish situation the moment the Fenian danger ceased to be formidable.

The Three Judges of the Parnell Commission appeared to be a little startled that I volunteered with some pride the story of my own brief period of authority in the Revolutionary Brotherhood. It is, however, as I told them, one of my fondest recollections. As commonly happens after a great failure, the organisation had fallen into a sad state of dilapidation and mutual recriminations, and it was pressed upon me that, as a stranger to their quarrels,

and as one whose young enthusiasms had not yet been quenched by disappointments, I might be able to exercise a useful influence in healing their differences and reviving their hopes. I was accordingly elected Secretary for the Province of Munster, and in that capacity was the medium of communication between the mysterious Supreme Council and the provincial County Centres. Two conclusions impressed themselves upon me more firmly every day of the two years during which the appointment lasted; the first being one of admiration and affection for the bulk of the men with whom I was brought in contact, and the other the almost ludicrous inadequacy of the means towards the end, and of the results when compared with the perils incurred.

It is quite true that, by the time I came to know the inward history of the movement, its first energies had been drained to the lees. Elsewhere<sup>1</sup> I have described the perilous system by which my brother had been in the habit of importing arms into Cork by the Newport steamer, and the thoroughgoing fright I received myself one night when I insisted on accompanying him in one of his hairbreadth adventures. By one of the strange coincidences of Irish life, when Mr. Michael Davitt read the article in the *Contemporary*, he remarked, "Why, I didn't know your brother, but it was I who was despatching from London by the Newport boat the rifles that you describe your brother as running the blockade

<sup>1</sup> In the *Contemporary Review* for May 1897.

in disembarking at Cork." Mr. Davitt was seized at last on the Paddington platform with a consignment of the contraband arms, and went through nine years of penal servitude for his share of the adventure.

My brother, though he bore a charmed life, in his innumerable comings and goings to the well-guarded Newport boat, received during those midnight hardships the seeds of the disease that killed him as truly as if a bullet from the police-guard on board the boat had pierced his heart. And the handfuls of rifles for which these awful perils were run week by week? The half of them, purchased at such an expense of liberty and life, were from time to time discovered to the police by some indigent traitor, and the rest grew rusty and rotten, and brought no danger to anybody except those who stored them.

My own experiences were of a time when the prospects were still more dreary and when the *moral* of the organisation had reached its lowest ebb. Sometimes there would be a gallant rally of the county "Centres" to make a fresh start; but before the meeting was half an hour in progress we were discussing not how the Irish Republic was to be brought about, but what had become of 12s. 6d. forwarded from Ballydehob five years before, for the purchase of warlike munitions, or where had this or that gentleman in the company been the night of the Rising? One anecdote will serve to show how



little mystery our proceedings had for the police. The head of the Detective Department once said to me, "Excuse me for saying so, Mr. O'Brien, but all the men in the barracks are wondering what in the world has come over you that you should put yourself in the power of some of the people you are associating with. There are fellows among them that would sell you to us for a bottle of whiskey."

"I don't suppose," I said, "you expect me to make any reply to an observation of that sort?"

"Indeed I don't," he said, "but it's the talk of all the men in the barracks, what a pity 'tis."

The gravity of the warning was brought home to me at last by an experience which can now be related without injury to any living person, and which was to me the crowning demonstration of the evils of secret conspiracy in Ireland. We had entered with high hopes upon a new project for attracting young men of a thoughtful turn to our ranks by founding a Literary Club, which was to be carried on openly both as a protection and a recruiting ground for the secret organisation, and to which some of us looked as a means of elevating and broadening our conspirators' conception of patriotic duty. Our plans were discussed at a remarkable gathering of the leaders, old and young, in a Cork hotel, and a special enthusiasm for the project was displayed by a man in a seemingly prosperous commercial position, who had for some time withdrawn from active participation in the movement, but now

assumed a foremost position with all his old dash. We separated in the highest spirits, confident that at last a soul was beginning to stir under the dry bones. Next day Cork was startled by the news of a highway robbery in broad day, within a few yards of one of the principal streets of the city. A messenger carrying £800 in gold from one of the breweries to a Bank was stopped in Post Office Lane by two men who clapped revolvers to his head and disappeared with the treasure. Having ascertained the facts and written off a lurid description of the occurrence for the evening paper, my thoughts turned a thousand miles away from the highway robbery to our arrangements of the previous night for setting the Literary Club on its feet without delay. I accordingly despatched by our office messenger, to the man who had volunteered to be the principal officer of the Club, a note written in lead-pencil in pretty much the following words :—

“HERALD” OFFICE, 4 o’c.

My dear M.—As you may judge, I am anxious to have the arrangements made last night completed as quickly as possible. I beg you will drop in on me at the *Herald* Office at half-past seven to-night without fail. Yours sincerely.

I asked the messenger, on his return, had he received any reply. “No, sir,” he said; “he looked very queer, as if he had taken drink. He didn’t seem to know what he was doing, and crumpled the letter up in his pocket.”

Two hours afterwards I learned that M. had been arrested for the Post Office Lane highway robbery, and my mysterious letter of appointment doubtless found in his pocket!

It was bad enough, every night I laid my head on my pillow for two years to have been liable to penal servitude, if the Government had thought us dangerous enough to stretch out its hand, but here was a development the horror of which no pen could picture. Needless to say, the secret movement was as free from stain in the transaction as was the English nation from the private guilt of Lord Castlereagh. It was the plot of not more than half a dozen bankrupt and desperate men, who sought to make a parade of their connection with the revolutionary movement in order to spread the impression that the robbery was undertaken to replenish the Fenian funds, and thus cast some glamour of popular sympathy around their crime. In this design they wholly failed, thanks to the stern measures of the revolutionary leaders themselves. The Supreme Council issued a secret circular expressing their abhorrence of the crime and proclaiming no quarter for the miscreants who committed it. Before the trial, the criminals' few sympathisers made desperate attempts to terrorise those who had issued the circular. I myself received an anonymous letter warning me not to walk alone on the Lee Road by night, as I was in the habit of doing. As in the case of the very large number of threatening letters



I have received during my life, the warning was not worth the dirty sheet of notepaper used in writing it. I continued to walk on the Lee Road alone, and nothing came of it. M. and his accomplice were duly convicted and sentenced to penal servitude. Nevertheless, guiltless as was the secret movement, and capable as the movement even in its then stage of enfeeblement proved itself to be to repel even the suspicion of complicity, it was only a secret movement which could have exposed men to the appalling danger, worse than any wound of bullet or dagger, I ran the night my letter of appointment was found in M.'s pocket. Knowing all that I now know of the attempts to make Parnell responsible for the deeds of murder clubs of whose very existence he was ignorant, and knowing the diabolical contrivances for the manufacture of crime which have since been brought home to the agents of Dublin Castle, the mind refuses to speculate what might have been the result if my mysterious letter and the fact of our meeting with the malefactors the previous night had been manipulated by police officers of the stamp of County-Inspector James Ellis French and Sergeant Sheridan, and by Crown Solicitors of the stamp of Mr. George Bolton, reinforced by the inventions of a Richard Pigott, and passed upon by a packed jury directed by any one of three or four Irish Judges whose names it would be painful to recall from a merciful oblivion. In a life fairly full of dangers in almost every shape, there is none

other which comes back upon my memory with such an overwhelming sense of horror as the risk then run for results so ludicrously inadequate.

The incident, while it completed my conviction as to the folly and deeply embedded evils of secret conspiracy as a means of freeing Ireland, did not for a moment shake my admiration of the Fenian men. Four-fifths of the best men of the Parnell movement were those who had received their first lessons of determination and unselfishness in the hard school of Fenianism. I have heard Parnell himself say, "The only foolish thing the Fenians ever did was the Rising." Under the apparent irony of the saying there is and was meant to be a deep compliment to the other than military virtues and achievements of the movement. There can be no harm in relating now, that the first time I saw Matt Harris—whom, as member for Galway in after years, you approached if you wanted to know the mind of the province of Connaught as inevitably as you crossed the Shannon Bridge in order to gain access to the Connaught plains—he was presiding over a Secret Congress or Parliament of the Irish Republican Brotherhood in the City Mansion Hotel in Dublin, not a rifleshooter from Dublin Castle. An impressive Speaker he made. He had a broad, judicial gravity which wanted no wig to complete its dignity, and a gift of rich native inspiration which wrung from the ranks of Tuscany—from one of the *Times'* counsel at the Parnell Commission, Sir Henry James—a cry of

admiration for the very speech he was denouncing. And solemn was the reflection that every man sat in that assembly with a sentence of penal servitude suspended over his head, and that every man's liberty, if not life, hung on his colleagues' fidelity. It was perhaps why this, my first Parliament, impressed me with more respect than subsequent ones on a more splendid theatre.

Another of my colleagues in the Republican Parliament, and in many another risky adventure of those and after years, was the present member for South Meath, Mr. David Sheehy. His father had become the owner of the mill in Arthur's Glen, in Mallow, where I had once come upon "the boys" going through the manual drill and casting bullets; and during the thirty-three years of my association with Sheehy, since the days when his blonde beard was the admiration of the "young Zean maids," I have never known him to be missing in an hour of danger, and never seen a sign of quailing in his eye. It was in the stirring times of the O'Donovan Rossa Election I first came across Tom Condon, the present member for East Tipperary. He was then a magnificent type of Tipperary manhood—tall and massively-built as a Guardsman—an excellent specimen of the "Flying Column," before whose onset poor Serjeant Heron's green cravat and his Whig retinue went ingloriously down. It was many years later, however, as will be seen hereafter, before I came to learn that his solid good sense and power



of communicating to masses of men his own moderation, as well as his own fearlessness, were even more remarkable than his fine physique or his charm as a vocalist in convivial hours. Another of the Fenian men, to whom I am indebted for a friend and Ireland for one of her most sterling soldiers, is Mr. Gilhooly, the member for West Cork. It is characteristic of Gladstone's fine human instinct that he should have, on several occasions, picked out for special notice, and even for confidential consultation in the lobby, a quiet, unimposing-looking little man, as to whose existence the mind of the average English Member of Parliament would present an absolute blank. Gladstone was right in divining that he had, in the modest little Bantry draper, an authentic type of the incorruptibility and indestructibility of the Irish cause. Gilhooly was one of the "County Centres" who were obliged to furnish me with periodical reports of their armaments, and I remember well that Bantry, with its thirty rifles and twelve revolvers—clean and bright under Gilhooly's vigilant eye—outstripped the record of every town in the province, outside Cork and Limerick cities; as for many a year since, when the word went out to turn to more hopeful weapons, the Bantry of Jim Gilhooly has continued to maintain an honourable and foremost place in the firing line. For obvious reasons, I do not feel myself at liberty to particularise further; but enough has been, perhaps, said to show why even the hideous perils

of my last occult experiences have not dimmed my abiding belief that the constitutional movement is indebted, for the cream of its men and the best of its practical achievements, to the courage, self-denial, and, if you will, glorious madness of the Fenian spirit. The Englishman who confines his view to the merely military ways and means or the material results will, no doubt, dismiss the Fenian history of abortive rebellion, hangings, and penal servitude with Dryden's contemptuous epitaph :

To die for Party is a common evil,  
But to be hanged for nonsense is the devil.

Moore had a better knowledge of his countrymen when, thinking all the time of the comrades of his own young college days, he describes the point of view of the Fire-worshippers of Iran :—

Who, though they know the strife is vain—  
Who, though they know the riven chain  
Snaps but to enter in the heart  
Of him who rends its links apart—  
Yet dare the issue, blest to be  
Even for one bleeding moment free,  
And die in pangs of Liberty !

If the Fenian fire-worshippers had not been willing to throw themselves into the flame with Hafed, Irish Catholics might still be paying a tithe of their substance for the support of an alien Church, the Irish tenants, whom the law is now inviting to become a nation of freeholders, would still be a herd of charterless slaves, and England would never have

suspected that Irish Members of Parliament came to Westminster on any more serious business than that of place-begging.

The deductions I drew from my own study of revolutionary methods in Ireland were briefly these :

1. The attraction of a Secret Society for the Irish mind is due to the inborn Gaelic love of mystery, to the habit, derived from the history of the country for several centuries, of thinking that all good work for a banned faith and country must be done in secret, and to that generous and adventurous passion which, failing the chance of an immediate armed fight, at least prefers the risks and excitement of preparing for it to the tamer work of speechifying or listening to speeches.
2. The moral influence of the Secret Society is wholly bad. A life of conflict with the Church demoralises all except the most stoical. A professional traitor is always one of its most active spirits, and sometimes its principal organiser. In the nature of things a Secret Society, especially in its declining stages, offers no test of the capacity of leaders, discourages finer minds, and ends by giving the upper hand to the intriguers, the incapables, or the base.
3. From the military point of view the results are ridiculously disproportioned to the risks.



Any one who has had practical experience of the difficulty of importing arms into Ireland in any considerable quantity will confess the absurdity of hoping to arm and give a military training to a country by such methods. In a small and talkative country, the best men in a conspiracy inevitably get known, and can be swept into the Government net any night it pleases, thus stripping the organisation of the flower of its fighting men before the hour for action, and dooming them to the revolting servitude of a convict prison, instead of giving them at least the compensations of the hero's death on a battlefield.

4. So far as Ireland can be a formidable military danger to England at all under present conditions, it is not by means of a secret conspiracy dragging along in semi-animation for years, but by means of a foreign landing following a defeat of the English fleet, after which, no doubt, so long as the craving for National Self-Government remains unsatisfied, almost the entire able-bodied population would be at the trumpet-call of the invaders.
5. For the above reasons, the overpowering majority of the bravest and most thoughtful men, who staked their all under the Fenian flag, while it still represented a serious call to armed rebellion, made up their minds that secret conspiracy, as the only mode of free-

ing Ireland, was morally deleterious as to its means and hopelessly ineffectual for its purpose, and that a serious and tolerant attention should be given to any more practicable proposal for composing the quarrel between the two countries.

6. Nevertheless, those who toiled with most sincerity in the ways of peace and conciliation remained unshaken in the conviction that in the unselfishness and courage, even in the seeming folly, of the Fenianism of its best days lay the surest strength and central heat of Irish patriotism, and in all the developments of the new National Policy of Conciliation, illustrated by the readiness for new trials by fire, they never cast back a regretful thought upon their own early war-dreams, nor attempted to decry those who still doubted that England was to be reasoned with by any less desperate arguments. They never sought to circumscribe the liberty of opinion of future generations.

*Nec sat rationis in armis.* That was the upshot of my conclusions as to secret conspiracy. But Parliamentary agitation, as it was practised then and for years to come, was still more disappointing.

The insignificant visible results of Isaac Butt's Federal movement, and the successes of the more vigorous young men whom his downfall brought to the front, have hitherto prevented justice from

being done to a man of genius and to a conception of National Policy of singular elevation and breadth of view. Butt made the discovery years before the advent of Parnell that the secret of a sound National movement was the physical-force spirit working by moral-force methods. O'Connell, in his declining days, rejected the combination when presented to him by Davis, and in doing so destroyed the chances both of a moral-force and of a physical-force programme. O'Connell also failed to realise that the Land question was the deepest concern of practical life in Ireland. So did the young Irelanders until Fintan Lalor and Mitchel preached it when too late. Butt felt to the quick all the evils of Irish landlordism. With an acute understanding of the Land question, and a statesman's grasp of the remedies, his soul was at the same time penetrated with Grattan's and Davis's sublime ambition of combining all classes and creeds in a perfectly self-centred, self-inspired, but genial and unaggressive Irish patriotism. But all the omens were against him. He raised his flag while the country was sick with the lassitude of the Fenian failure, and before any except the most far-sighted of the revolutionary leaders could be got to tolerate what they regarded as a Parliamentary imposture. They respected Butt; only the utmost service they could be induced to do him was to leave him alone.

Parnell arrived at a time when, with the help of Mr. Michael Davitt and Mr. John Devoy, the full



strength of the revolutionary forces was at his call. In the years when Butt's movement was striving to establish itself, agricultural prosperity in Ireland was at its height and the farmers were proportionately lethargic. In 1875 the curve of agricultural prices reached its topmost. Parnell and the Land League found a country the half of which was stricken with famine, and the most thriving of whose counties was lashed to agitation by the encroachments of foreign competition. Butt, indeed, rallied a considerable body of the Irish gentry to the first gentle love-feasts of the Home Rule movement (a felicitous name-programme which it was his good fortune to hit upon). The Irish gentry had not at that time, however, any solid ground of interest, such as the abolition of Landlordism on opulent and popular terms offered them under the Act of 1903 supplies, for allying their future fortunes with the people's. They enrolled themselves in a platonic way as Home Rulers, largely through spite against Gladstone for disestablishing their Church. Their only active co-operation with Butt was to do him the disservice of joining his Parliamentary Party and helping to weaken and disintegrate it. Parnell, on the contrary, had the simpler and more popular task of unceremoniously fighting the Irish gentry under circumstances in which their vices, their cruel and stupid exactions, their incapacity to serve either their own enlightened interests or their country, made it easy to inflame against them the interests

and the passions of a young democracy, now for the first time aroused to a knowledge of their rights and of their power.

Butt was in one sense too late, because too old. He came, in another sense, too soon. Above all, this most delightful but ill-starred Irishman had a past. It was true of him, as of the hero of Corneille's tragedy, that "one half of his life put the other half in the tomb." The errors of his young days will always be gently judged in Ireland, for they were largely due to that fondness for good fellowship and improvident generosity which causes the countrymen of Goldsmith to take a greater pride in the poet's pension to the landlady of his garret in Green Arbour Court in his ragged and starving days than in his monument in Westminster Abbey.

Butt's early career in Parliament fell upon days when wine-bibbing and gaming and a reckless contempt for money were not reckoned a reproach, if they were not indeed reckoned a mark of breeding, in a gentleman. As the O'Gorman Mahon, who "heard the chimes at midnight" himself in many a frolic of the gods, once remarked to me, "Old Sir D. was nearly always very drunk when I carried him home from the House, but he was drunk like a gentleman, and by G—<sup>1</sup> there wasn't a policeman in London wouldn't know the difference and lend me a hand." The young bloods of Butt's first

<sup>1</sup> For the gentlemen of the O'Gorman Mahon school, oaths were as pretty an accomplishment as pistol-shooting—and less harmful

Parliament were not above having a pugilistic bout with a cabman, on condition of afterwards throwing a sovereign to him to cure his bruises. They would stoop to any humiliation to discount a bill with some villainous money-lender, and straightway hand over half the proceeds to some poor wretch more distressed than themselves. In the wantonness of his magnificent powers, he would go down "special" to the Cork Assizes in some great cause, and, after enthralling the Court with his eloquence and subtlety all day, would spend the entire night at the card-table, plunge into a bath in the morning, and, without a wink of sleep, return to Court and get through the new day with undiminished intellectual lustre. Had he clung to his profession, he would have been the unquestioned *ἀναξ ἀνδρῶν*, even of a breed of lawyers of the true heroic stature, like Whiteside, Armstrong, and O'Hagan. Had he thrown himself with all his might into the Parliamentary arena, as the brilliant young Tory swordsman who was put up to face O'Connell, or as the Irish Nationalist leader of noble and high-sighted range—which O'Connell had the acumen to predict he would yet be—I am certain no Parliament man of our day, with the exception of Gladstone and Disraeli, would be now mentioned in the same companionship.

Even in his latter years, when his career, both at the Bar and in Parliament, had been sadly bruised by disappointments, he had only to appear in the hall of the Four Courts, and a flight of attorneys



immediately swooped down upon him with briefs. So, unhappily, would Nemesis swoop down upon him with equal celerity. Outside the laughing group of admiring brothers of the Bar and prosperous attorneys that would gather around him as he placed his back to one of the statues in the hall and warmed them with his sunny smile and his caressing friendliness, you would see the figure of a dun or a greasy-looking bill-discounter darkly hovering, and presently you might see the unlucky man of genius glide away from the admiring circle and slip his arm under that of his creepy creditor and walk off with him, chatting and comparing notes as though they were a pair of Parliamentary colleagues, deep in some weighty concern of State.

When he went down to contest Limerick City, as the leader of the new Home Rule Party, word got abroad that a bankruptcy messenger had also arrived to arrest him for debt. The enthusiastic meeting awaiting him in the theatre had only to be informed that "circumstances over which he had no control" prevented him from being with them. The impish humour that always attends Irish tragedies followed him in his flight to Killaloe, a town some eighteen miles away in the county of Clare. Despite all his precautions as to secrecy, the news reached the boys of Killaloe that the distinguished Irishman had arrived in their midst. Presently there were heard the strains of a band, and torchlights flared up in the darkness, and the

roadway outside the hotel was alive with a cheering crowd. The unfortunate gentleman had to listen, twirling his glasses nervously in his fingers, as was his wont, while an address was read to him, welcoming him to the old capital of King Brian Boroimhe (the ruins of whose palace of Kinkora are close at hand), and assuring him that that famous monarch himself did not command a truer allegiance from the men of Killaloe than their illustrious visitor. He had barely time to stammer a few sentences of excruciating gratitude for their kindness, and to slip away through the backyard of the hotel, when the Court Messenger, who had pursued him from Limerick, arrived to find the band and the torchlights still in their glory, but his quarry flown.<sup>1</sup>

Butt grounded all the hopes of his movement upon the co-operation, or at least the benevolent neutrality, of the Irish Republican Brotherhood

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Henry O'Shea, who was the moving spirit of the Butt Election Committee, writes me that Butt's faithful conducting agent, Mr. John Ellard, was afraid to let even the Committee know the secret of the sudden disappearance of the candidate. They held torchlight processions night after night, while their absent chief was flying from one country-house to another from his pursuers. "The day of nomination arrived, and I then first learned the whereabouts of our candidate from a young friend of Butt's, named Charles Conway, who went with him. He told me they had quite a series of exploits in escaping from the bailiffs, who were hot on the scent, and I heard they covered nearly the same route that was followed by Sarsfield in his celebrated night raid on King William's siege train." Mr. O'Shea adds another tragic touch. "I presume you know Butt was arrested for debt at the time of his second Limerick election. I know all the circumstances, for I was up with him in Eccles Street, and I found him with two bailiffs sitting outside his dining-room door in the hall." What a picture of the Irish leader in the throes of a General Election!

(which was the official title of the Fenian organisation). In this he anticipated the Land League, although with less fortunate results. His most potent source of influence with "the extreme men" was his right trusty friend John Nolan, a Dublin commercial traveller, still remembered as "Amnesty" Nolan, because he was the soul and strong right arm of the great Amnesty campaign of 1868-69. Nolan had a more extraordinary command over a multitude than any other man I ever knew. In a procession a hundred thousand strong he had only to pass the signal, and bands, banners, and innumerable trade-bodies obeyed him as the waves obeyed the nod of Neptune. His Napoleonic power over the scores of National bands in Dublin (a sufficiently touchy tribe) gave rise to the story that, whenever some great popular manifestation was in contemplation, his order of the day was: "Send out invitations to the brass bands and orders to the fife-and-drums."

It was during the Amnesty campaign also I first came to know Mr. Patrick Egan, who afterwards contributed in so large a degree to the most solid and worst requited work connected with the organisation of the Land League. Egan, who was a prosperous Dublin merchant, was one of the quietest and most meekly spoken of men, but possessed in a remarkable degree the keenest political acumen, and a courage which nothing could dishearten, combined with a prudence in which no Irish revolutionist in my circle of knowledge ever excelled him. He



was an "opportunist" in the best sense—that of an opportunism based on the interests of his country, and not upon any interest or ambition of his own. Ready for any sacrifice himself, he never hesitated to stand up against those who, impotent to effect anything themselves by force of arms, would yet cry anathema upon all who offered the country a brighter prospect of success by other methods. Characteristically enough, too, of a good many of the revolutionary chiefs, while he fought the priests with gloves of steel in their crusades against the extreme men, he was at heart unshakably a Catholic. When the Government struck their first dangerous blow at the Land League, and the Executive betook themselves to Paris, I remember one evening in a hotel of the Rue de Rivoli a man, who was then (but not for long) a member of the Executive—the only foul-mouthed man or enemy of religion I ever came across among the Land League leaders—burst out, as was his habit, into some extremely coarse abuse of priests and nuns. Egan listened without a word. As the fellow's language grew more loathsome, we, who knew Egan's storm-signals, saw the tips of his ears redden and a bright scarlet point appear in the centre of his cheeks. Suddenly, as a lightning flash in a roll of thunder, he flamed forth—"You filthy dog, I've put up with a good deal. If you utter one word more against my religion in my hearing, by G—Almighty I'll smash your pig's head into a pudding!"

The mighty oath with which the defence of

religion was all unconsciously mingled gave a certain comic relief to the tension of the situation ; but religion was safe, the "one word more" was never spoken. It only remains to add, by way of commentary upon the usual accompaniments of a foul tongue and flippant irreligion, that some months afterwards, when Parnell was arrested and the Land League suppressed, — fled from the storm by the first train from Dublin to his country home, and was never heard of more in Irish politics.

The Amnesty to the Fenian prisoners afforded Butt an opportunity of endeavouring to blend the moderate and revolutionary forces in a great effort for constitutional freedom through their influence. I related in an American magazine, as follows, an incident which proves him to have striven hard for that friendly alliance which Parnell, in more propitious circumstances, effected seven years later :—

A banquet was being given to the first batch of amnestied Fenians in Hood's Hotel, in Great Brunswick Street, Dublin. I was sent up by the *Cork Herald*—a shy and inexperienced boy, completely overawed by the immensity of Dublin—to report it. It turned out that it had been resolved to be wiser in those dangerous times to have no newspaper report of the speeches ; but, as a friend, intimately known to the famous John Nolan and Mr. P. F. Johnson, of Kanturk, who were the organisers of the banquet, I was made personally welcome at the board. Butt had been engaged at the Four Courts during the day, in the trial of a man named Barrett for firing at a Galway landlord, and the jury were sitting late to finish the case. It was not until the dinner was over, and

the speech-making begun, that the great counsel arrived with the news that he had been victorious and the prisoner acquitted. Flushed with the triumph, he stood up to speak, and, in a life of pretty large experience, I have never yet heard a more body-and-soul thrilling speech, with two exceptions—one being Captain Mackey's speech from the dock in Cork, where he had the very judge in a flood of tears ; and the other, Mr. Gladstone's lion-like "flowing-tide" speech the night the Home Rule Bill of 1886 was beaten.

Butt's speech was almost wholly a plea to the released Fenian leaders to give him a chance for trying other means. He was argumentative, pathetic, passionate by turns ; but the passage that will always live in my memory was that in which, in language actually blazing with the divine fire of eloquence, he declared that, if the conciliatory methods he pleaded for failed, he would not only give way to those who would lead where all the nations of the free had gone before them, but that, old as he was, his arm and his life would be at their service in the venture. At John Nolan's suggestion, I had taken a note of the speech, and when the banquet was over, I went to Mr. Butt to beg for permission to publish a speech with which the blood of everybody present was still tingling. He was dismayed at the request. He said he had been told there were to be no reporters present, and that the publication of the speech would ruin all hope for his contemplated movement. I told him that, of course, his wishes would be respected ; but he continued to show so intense an anxiety on the subject that, in order to completely reassure him, I threw my note-book into the fire, where it peacefully burnt away. I thought then, as I have often thought since, that there perished in the ashes not only an interesting piece of history, but one of the most divine outbursts of eloquence that ever left human lips. Some rumours crept into the English papers that Mr. Butt had made an extraordinary speech at the



banquet, and the Chief Secretary was asked a few nights afterwards in the House of Commons, what notice was to be taken of Mr. Butt's conduct as a Queen's Counsel ; but, of course, there was no record of the speech, and the matter went no further ; and the fact gave me some comfort for returning to Cork empty-handed, after destroying a note-book which would now be worth more than its weight in gold.

The question whether the extreme men were to tolerate the Home Rule Federal Movement or stamp it out came to an issue on the eve of the Home Rule Conference of 1873. It would have been illegal, even at that late date, to have summoned a Convention of elected delegates. Butt had to content himself with a "Conference" in the Rotunda, of such elements as might choose to present themselves. The extreme men went up to Dublin in great force ; and, as it was known that their attitude would decide whether the Conference was to end in triumph or ignominy, great was the disquietude of the country gentlemen, Members of Parliament, priests, and town councillors, who formed the bulk of the assembly, as to the upshot of their deliberations. It was my good fortune to attend the confidential meeting in a Dublin hotel (the Angel, if I remember aright) at which the final decision was taken. John Nolan and Pat Egan were breast-high for cordial co-operation. So was Mr. John O'Connor Power, who was shortly after to be member for Mayo, and was at that time a chief potentate in the Supreme Council's mysterious

sphere of influence ; a man of great resolution, with a merciless underjaw, a furious temper governed by a carefully studied urbanity of manner, and a calm, strong voice, that made the most commonplace observation impressive ; resolute enough in the ways of revolution to have himself headed raids for arms, and walked for years under the shadow of the gallows, but gifted also with a common-sense keen enough and fearless enough to guide him in the evolution from the impracticable to a wise and patriotic possibilism.

Another striking personality at the council-board that night was Mr. John Ferguson, of Glasgow ; never, I think, a sworn revolutionist, but for more than a quarter of a century one of the most trusted and picturesque figures in every historic Irish scene — what with his mane of jet-black hair, the flash of his fanatical eye, the erect courage of the Northern Protestant, his rich rhetoric and lifelong devotion to noble ideals and, in his own favourite words, “eternal verities.” There were not wanting fire-eyed young disputants from the country, who would have no compromise, and who would have welcomed back the brutalities of the Penal laws, and the pitch-caps and floggings of the savage yeomanry of '98, rather than put their trust in Parliamentary agitation. There were, again, men like Mr. C. G. Doran who, while profoundly distrusting any doctrine but that of arms, were not prepared to refuse at least a tolerant trial of his plans to a leader of

genius, on whose personal sincerity, at least, he could rely.

And this was the spirit which eventually prevailed. I have never lost the impression of high and self-denying patriotic duty, struggling against a congenital repugnance to Parliamentary ways and men, which characterised the solemn deliberations of that night. To poor Butt's intense relief (for his was a nature as full of sensitive chords as a Stradivarius fiddle), Nolan and Egan were able to bear him good news an hour or two after midnight; and when, the next day, Mr. O'Connor Power arose from the midst of the Extreme Left to speak his message of toleration and encouragement, a quiver of delight went through the Conference, and many of the shakier Members of Parliament, who had been waiting to see how far it would be safe to stand aloof from this irksome new movement, promptly made up their minds that Butt's flag was going to sweep the country.

It was not an unquestioning allegiance, however, that the Extreme Left promised to Butt's movement, but only toleration, and toleration qualified by a time-limit. As O'Connell had been led into the rash prediction that an Irish Parliament would be sitting before the end of the "Repeal Year" of 1843, so Butt allowed himself to be drawn into a wager, at Canon Rice's table in Queenstown in 1865, that an Irish Parliament would be won within ten years from that date. He was held mercilessly



to his prediction by the impatient and incredulous. It may be doubted, indeed, whether, deeply depressed as the country still was by recent failures and repressive rigours, any real success in girding up the national energies anew was at that time possible. All went smoothly on the surface, but went half-heartedly also. There were many sporadic outbursts of fine national spirit in the course of Butt's movement, in almost all of which, as it happened, I had the privilege of living much behind the scenes, with a pressman's gift of invisibility for the general public, but none the less a friend and confidant of the principal actors.

There was the famous Kerry election of 1870, in which the landlord nominee of Lord Kenmare and the Catholic Bishop received an unmerciful beating from the young Protestant squire, Mr. Rowland Ponsonby Blennerhassett, who had just left Oxford glowing with a gentle passion for Home Rule. It was the first time (and indeed the last) that the mere watchword "Home Rule" seized upon a whole county with the power of some ancient word of enchantment. It was the cry with which men daily saluted one another in the streets, and it was echoed back from the remotest fastnesses of the Kerry mountains, as we passed, by night or by day, through the rains and tempests of that wild winter. I can still hear the pretty academic drawl of the candidate's "Howm Rule for Ayland," and

the full-mouthed, full-hearted "Hawm Rooil" which was shouted back by the multitude, in the delightful music of the broad Kerry Doric. It was the last contested election in Ireland before the Ballot Act came into force; and many were the scenes of intoxicating excitement, as the tenants burst from the custody of their landlords, and, in many cases, of their priests as well (although some of the most beloved of the Kerry priests respectfully but firmly declined, like their people, to be led to the polls by Lord Kenmare or the Bishop), and, having availed themselves of the landlords' cars as far as the polling-places, deserted the jaunting-cars and their escorts of dragoons, and, heedless of eviction or of penalties more dreaded still, dashed up to the polling-booths to give expression to the irrepressible Irish spirit within them.

Another event which did much to restore belief in the purity of Parliamentary life was the return of "Honest Joe Ronayne" for Cork City. Ronayne was one of the highest types of incorruptible rectitude our race has produced, and was possessed withal of a geniality and wit unsurpassed, even in a city where any chance crowd around a platform will bubble over with *bons mots* worthy of those who "drank champagne with the wits" in the days of the giants. His friend, Denny Lane, himself a charming combination of poet, wit, and chemist, in his beautiful words over Ronayne's grave, compared him to one of those vessels of Venetian glass of

such exquisitely sensitive material that they fell to pieces at the touch of poison.

A party that contained Joe Ronayne could never be wholly lost. It was from him, on one of his returns from Parliament, I heard the first intimation of the greatness of Parnell. Ronayne was then growing sick of the vainness and hollowness of the Parliamentary fight. "I have known a paving-stone or a black bottle to do better work for Ireland than the entire lot," he said. "There is nothing for an Irish Member to do in that infernal House except to drink himself to death or look for a place. I would not think it worth the price of the railway ticket to go back there, only for one young man who's barely able to utter three consecutive sentences. Keep your eye on Parnell. He's as meek as a Methodist minister, but he'll tread upon John Bull's corns harder than ever Boney did."

Ronayne himself, who had made a fortune in California as an engineer and subsequently built several Irish railways,<sup>1</sup> was unhappily an old man already. The snows had completely taken possession of the thick fleece of hair and beard that fringed his lion-like head. His fortitude and wit did not desert him, even on his deathbed. The surgeons found the amputation of his leg from the thigh to be necessary. The ether they administered to him had

<sup>1</sup> He used to say of one of them, the Macroon Railway, which he built at his own financial risk: "You need never be afraid of being hurt by an accident on the Macroon Railway. 'Tis built upon *tick*!!"



no effect upon his powerful brain, and he watched the operation throughout without flinching. When it was completed, "Well," said he, "I suppose I cannot *stand* for the City any more, but I'll certainly *stump* the County!" Alas, Fate did not spare even courage like his. When the surgeons had gone, the wound began to bleed afresh, and before they could be called back, Cork had lost for ever its noble representative, and the Home Rule movement one of its principal organs of vitality.

Dr. Croke's strong hand and clear sight were not yet there to save the influence of the clergy from the danger caused by the propensity to range themselves in politics in opposite camps from their people. In Longford, they opposed the election of the sweet-tempered veteran, Mr. John Martin, in the interests of a young military popinjay, who was the son of a local nobleman and landlord; and to such extremes did their zeal push some of the more intemperate, that I have heard Mr. A. M. Sullivan (who was, perhaps, the devoutest as well as most eloquent Catholic champion of his generation) relate that, on Sunday morning, after he had received Holy Communion at the Longford Cathedral during the contest, he heard himself denounced from the altar by name as an infidel and a Garibaldian. A no less remarkable conflict broke out in Limerick County. Mr. W. H. O'Sullivan, who was for some years the tallest man in the House of Commons, and bigger in heart even than in his inches, was, for some

obscure reason, the object of a denunciation signed by the Bishop and priests of Limerick, who took the side of a detested local Catholic landlord, named Kelly. The result was that at several of the country chapels men stood up in the midst of the congregation and made answer to the comminations hurled at them from the altar. When the ballot-boxes were opened, it was found that the candidate of the democracy was returned by an overwhelming vote by one of the most tenderly Catholic constituencies in the island.

Among the general body of the Catholic clergy, indeed, there was no hostility to Butt. There were even many who were his fast friends, although I can remember only one who was a constant figure on his platforms (a glorious old gentleman from the County Clare, Father Quaid, P.P., of O'Callaghan's Mills, the bare memory of whose beaming Irish face and sesquipedalian eloquence makes the world feel warmer and kindlier).<sup>1</sup> But the truth is that, with the people and the priests alike, the movement, to use the slang of a later day, never "caught on." All the triumphs at the polls just mentioned were isolated explosions directed to nothing in particular,

<sup>1</sup> His last public manifesto was a letter to the *Nation*, indignantly protesting against a handsome obituary notice of him which that journal had published on the report that he had passed away. "I humbly supplicate, Mr. Editor," he wrote, "with the consciousness of truth and justice, nay, I demand in tones of thunder, that you will deliver over the author of this dastardly libel upon my character to the public pillory, there to be pelted with scorn and overwhelmed with the execrations of his indignant fellow-countrymen."

except the relief of irrepressible National feeling, *quand même*. At the General Election, it is true, a party of sixty Home Rulers were duly returned with a general mandate to follow Butt's lead. But they formed an incongruous and barbaric mosaic, held together by no discipline and a not much larger quantity of principle. A few gifted Nationalists like Ronayne and A. M. Sullivan were jostled on the one hand by blunder-headed Tory landlords, like Colonel King-Harman, and on the other by a group of mild-mannered Whig lawyers, open to suggestions of a place, while a still larger number of excellent arm-chair politicians knew little what exactly they were driving at except to retain their seats.

A vigorous public opinion, alone, could have kept such a team passably together within the shafts ; and of such a public opinion Butt had not even the rudiments. In his own constituency of Limerick (and it was his most reliable citadel) he came second on the poll, the first being a local lawyer who afterwards subsided into a commissionership in Dublin Castle.<sup>1</sup> His organisation had scarcely any genuine local branches, and, as I have mentioned, could not

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Henry O'Shea tells me that at this second election, which was his first under the Ballot Act, Mr. Butt was himself afraid he would be defeated, owing to the power of corruption and the torpor of public opinion. Another singular miscalculation as to the effect of the Ballot Act was made by Mr. Gladstone, who, in the House of Commons, challengingly told Mr. John Martin he was ready to compete with him in the ballot for the favour of his Irish fellow-countrymen. The Ballot Act was, on the contrary, the death-blow of English party influence, as well as of landlord influence in Ireland.



hold a public meeting, even in the friendly city of Cork, without a fight for the platform with the unconvinced Extremists. His genius, so to say, provided Ireland with the egg from which all good things for her have since come forth ; but the time was not yet warm enough to hatch it. The folly of the English Parliament completed the failure which the scepticism of the country and the unreliability of his Party commenced. The moment English Ministers found the Irish leader spoke from the lofty eminence of a constitutional statesman as to statesmen of equal good faith, and that there was neither rebellion nor agrarian tumult to be apprehended behind him in Ireland, they concluded, as usual, that the Irish difficulty was disposed of, and went to sleep without heeding the voice of Butt's high constitutional appeals. The time came when all the world understood that in enunciating the principle of devolution, in place of revolution, Butt had done an epoch-making thing for England as well as Ireland ; but the time was not yet for anything except stolid indifference in the English Parliament.

It was mournful to attend Butt's annual "account of his stewardship" in the Limerick theatre, and hear him go through the monotonous litany of his "assaults all along the line of English misgovernment in Ireland." The "assaults," after several years' weary battle, yielded nothing but a tiny Act to abolish the law against Conventions, and enable the City corporations to nominate their sheriffs. It

was the one ewe-lamb which he had to bring home as the reward of all his buffeted and ill-appreciated genius. There was the inevitable mixture of tragedy and farce in the story of his decline. At a banquet one night in his honour in the theatre, the discontent of the Extreme Men first openly showed itself in an irruption of turbulent young men, one of whom, a chimney-sweep whose face was black as Eblis with the recent labours of his profession, jumped on one of the tables laden with glasses and decanters, and marched up the whole length of the table, crashing through a procession of breaking glass as he went, to put some question to the unfortunate guest of the evening — what question history will never know, for the sweep was hurled off the table by a gigantic Limerick man in almost as dilapidated a condition as the broken glassware.

Not, indeed, that the mass of the people then or ever showed any ungrateful insensibility to Butt's fine qualities, or those of any man who ever strove his honest best in their cause. But there was no sign of progress tangible enough to give the reply to the impatient cry that a sufficiently fair trial had been given to constitutional agitation, and that it had once more proved fruitless. What was practically the end came one Easter Monday, when Butt rode in a great procession of the trades and country Nationalists to a meeting at the O'Connell monument. Mr. John Daly, who was then in the prime of manhood, and who, had he

received the educational training that would have curbed an impetuosity sometimes bordering on arrogance, might have been one of the intellectual forces of his time, made up his mind to break up the procession by the strong hand. He acted wholly of his own volition, and in defiance even of his own hierarchical chiefs in the secret movement. His principal lieutenant in Limerick, a man of the finest and most chivalrous character, besought him to give up the project, but, finding him obdurate, with the soldier's spirit, took his place and suffered by the side of his chief. It was an extraordinary scene, and highly though it amused flippant Englishmen with the spectacle of Irish quarrelsomeness, it had deeper lessons for those who might conceive it to be truer wisdom to conciliate Irish disaffection than to deride it. Daly's band did not number more than fifty all told. They took their stand in a double rank in front of the O'Connell monument, facing the procession which was winding its huge length along through George's Street. When the head of the procession arrived within a couple of dozen yards of the monument the charge was given, and, with uplifted cudgels, the fifty rushed right into the thick of the oncoming thousands. There was a sharp and bloody struggle for a few minutes. Then, when word reached the processionists in bulk of what was happening, there came a general rush to the front, and the disturbers were utterly borne down



by the torrent—some stretched bleeding on the ground and the rest fighting gallantly to the last as they were driven off the field. Butt's meeting went triumphantly forward—movements of National dimensions never are killed at a blow—but Butt's Federalism received its death-wound, as a popular force, that day in Limerick, as surely as O'Connell's Repeal movement did the night of Peel's proclamation of the Clontarf Monster meeting.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SICKNESS, POLITICAL AND PHYSICAL

1870-1875

ENOUGH has been said to explain why I turned away with an equally heavy heart from the revolutionary and from the constitutional camps. That junction of their best forces, in which alone I could see hope, was beyond any power of an unknown youngster to bring about; and the stupid self-complacency of English statesmanship, in view of a divided and disheartened Ireland, proved that we had many a year to wait still before my mad vision, in the *Daily News* letter, of a reconciliation between the two races on the basis of a frank recognition of Irish Nationality, could be anything except a vision. Gladstone fondly believed he would extirpate Home Rule by offering the Bishops a Catholic university, and Gladstone was in front of his countrymen by a generation. Of the old Republican, who died when all seemed lost, in the days of the Second Empire, it was written :

N'ayant pu l'éveiller, il s'était endormi.

Having failed to awaken the slumbering spirit of the country, he had fallen into slumber himself. It might stand for the epitaph of my own boyish political activities.

For five years to come, I lived almost wholly for the second great passion of my life—one which, at every intermission of my feverish public career, has invariably struggled hard to become the first—I mean the love of books and letters. Indeed, the thirst for reading and the impulse to get initiated, no matter in how insignificant a capacity, in the divine mysteries of authorship, had never abated; but the twofold passion now broke forth with a violence and want of measure which, as has been too often the fault of my methods of work, knew no restraint except complete bodily prostration.

It would be, perhaps, hard to find a more cruel commentary upon the position of Irish Catholics, in the matter of University education, than the fact that the only reason why I entered the Queen's University was to gain access to a library. I should, indeed, have dearly loved to enter it for the sake of the Arts' course, but that enticing field was closed to Catholics by the rigid decree of the Bishops against the godless Colleges. In the nature of things the Bishops relaxed their rigour in the case of what the Germans call the "bread-studies," otherwise Irish Catholics would still be all but as completely debarred from the professions of physic, law, and engineering as they were under the Penal



Statutes of Queen Anne. I therefore elected to matriculate in law, as the profession for which I had the least aversion of the three; but, in truth, the overruling motive was not any hankering for the learned profession of the law, which I never contemplated following, but the desire to get at the rich store of books in the library of the Cork Queen's College; the other motive, I am sorry to say, being to add to our small family income by making a raid upon the College Scholarships. And, as the preliminary College fees were a difficulty for a slender purse, I think the eagerness to earn them had a good deal to do with the amusing energy I displayed in turning out all sorts of literary handiwork and trying to find a market for it. If the quality had only been equal to the variety and fecundity, it would be a truly surprising brood of romances, short stories, essays, newspaper correspondence, pages of history, and comic literature which were presented at the doors of almost every publisher in the three kingdoms. There was even a five-act drama called *Bride or Banshee?* It may be suspected who the heroine was. Indeed, the eminent actor-manager, Mr. Clarence Holt, to whom I submitted the manuscript, gently hinted that there was nothing except heroine in it.

The serious will, no doubt, frown at my thinking it worth while to relate the adventures of my first full-length novel, which had the absurd title of '*Neath Silver Mask*. (I remember nothing of the

story except its title, which was, I think, intended to mean that Revenge might sometimes make a shining excuse for itself.) Nevertheless, these adventures may divert more frivolous minds, and possibly even help brave young Irishmen against that tendency to be easily discouraged which is one of the weaknesses we inherit from a history of unvarying failures. Two small scribbling-books which survive from that time supply me with the necessary material, except during the two years when any incautious memorandum of mine was liable, at any moment, to come under the eye of the police. Here is the record of no less than twenty-two publishers to whom, one after one, I persisted in proffering the manuscript, until at last, in a mood of vexed philosophy, I jotted down in advance a prolonged programme of failures :—

*Aug. 22nd.* Chapman and Hall won't have it.—*Aug. 29th.* Nor Tinsley Brothers.—*Sept. 4th.* Routledge "is not in the habit of publishing new works of fiction." Off goes the manuscript again by to-night's post. I will pester the whole tribe of them.—*Sept. 8th.* *All the Year Round* was at least prompt with the usual answer. The unfortunate manuscript is getting badly tattered, but it will hold out another while. To-night to Smith, Elder, and Co., Waterloo Place. Here is my programme as at present advised :—S. E. and Co. ought to let me have it back by Monday or Tuesday. Bentley, New Burlington Street, comes next, who will probably send it back by Saturday. Manuscript will then be ready to be dispatched to Duffy, who, of course, can't afford to buy. Irish too poor and English too English. After that, the

haughty Longmans; Cameron and Ferguson, Glasgow (who have a good Irish drop in them); perhaps a London magazine or two; and then I suppose it will find its grave somewhere in some Cork or Dublin weekly newspaper.

Sometimes the courage of the author was much plucked down by those incessant rebuffs.

After recording the despatch of the manuscript to *St. Paul's Magazine*—

“God speed the plough! En parenthèse, *He won't speed it*—at least *NOT THIS TIME*” (in printed capitals). “But this is only my way of hedging, to give myself at least the comfort of being a true prophet, if only a prophet of evil. . . . The bill for postage will be twice the price I will ever get for it. I am pretty tired of the world's ways. I verily believe I would be a monk, only for the stings of the flesh; or a farm-labourer, if I could exist on stirabout; or a wanderer on some South American pampa or cordillera, only for the ties that chain me here.”

But there was always sure to come the prompt reaction. Under the above gloomy entry comes:

Later and cooler—Second thoughts are better, after all, than anything the Andes could give me. I am not quite so savage through vexation as not to see through the nonsense a man writes when he gets back a manuscript. Goldsmith, when he lived up Break-neck-Steps, would have thought my salary a sumptuous one; and he had the *Vicar of Wakefield* in his brain. Off with the immortal manuscript by next post to *Bow Bells*.

I had come humbly to—*Bow Bells*. As vainly, too, as to the Muses' more regal abodes. The story at length found its expected “grave” in a little



Dublin journal for ladies, called the *Billet-Doux*, the proprietor of which valiantly bid £10 for the copyright, but some months afterwards went bankrupt and compounded with me for 30s. ; and as the poor man liked the tale so well that he contemplated publishing it in book-form, I was a great deal more sympathetic with his misfortunes than indignant at the composition. But the adventures of '*Neath Silver Mask* were not over yet. Amongst my varied incursions on the publishers, I had offered the copyright to Mr. Patrick Donahoe, the proprietor of the most prosperous of the Irish-American journals, the *Boston Pilot*. On April 16th, 1871, I received a reply from Mr. John Boyle O'Reilly, the editor of the *Pilot*, intimating that "Mr. Donahoe will take the story for publication in the *Pilot*, and, of course, remunerate you for it. He cannot, however, publish it for some months, as we have just received a long story from Sister Clare (the Nun of Kenmare), which we publish next." <sup>1</sup>

A note scribbled on the other sheet of the letter was to me, however, far the most precious portion of the communication :—

"PILOT" OFFICE, BOSTON, MASS.,  
30th March 1871.

William O'Brien, Esq.

My dear Sir—I wrote the other side as editor of the *Pilot*. Let me write a word as an admirer of your story.

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Donahoe subsequently published the story in a pretty booklet, which was my first offspring in the book-world.

When you sent your first communication here, I read it and advised Mr. Donahoe to accept it. I have since read what I have seen in the *Billet-Doux*, and I congratulate you heartily on your success and ability.

This paper has an enormous circulation in comparison to all other Irish journals, and I trust that its readers will long be acquainted with your capital work.—Sincerely,

J. BOYLE O'REILLY.

The writer was, perhaps, the most influential Irish-American who ever lived. O'Reilly, who entered the 10th Hussars to acquire a military training, was a Fenian convict, who escaped from Western Australia in a row-boat under romantic circumstances. It was my happiness many years after to make his acquaintance in the midst of his own city of Boston, where for his irresistible personal charm, no less than for his fame as a poet and publicist, he was as beloved a legend with the New England Puritans as the commander of the *Mayflower*, and by the Irish population of Boston was scarcely less adored than Robert Emmet. He had once marked out, by the banks of his native Boyne, the spot where he should like to take his long sleep; but when it was proposed to transfer his body to Ireland, Puritan and Irishman alike rose up and declared they would meet on another Bunker Hill the men who would come to take him. Of such a brain-power and a heart-power over the prejudices of the very Blue Laws of Massachusetts was the Irishman for whom English wisdom could find no better use than a flogging in the barrack-square of

Dublin and a den in a West Australian convict hulk!

In the meantime, I had applied myself with all my mental thews and sinews to win the Law Scholarship at the College. The text-books were Williams on *Real Property* and Austin's *Jurisprudence*. The latter had a sufficient flavour of metaphysics and high state philosophy to reconcile me to its quaint locutions, and another of our text-books, Maine's *Ancient Law*, was full of charm; but the English Law of Real Property never impressed me as being any better than the deep-laid plot of a cunning attorney to cheat whole generations of people in advance. Even Blackstone was not able to throw a decent vesture over the fraud. All the same, I burrowed my way determinedly through the mountains of learned lumber, with no more love for the law than the mining engineer has for the quartz through which he blasts the way for his tunnel. In addition to the daily grind of shorthand-writing, and evenings devoted to all sorts of literary scribblings, I would tunnel away through the law-books far into the night, by the light of a single candle, until my eyesight began dangerously to fail me, and the entries in my scribbling-books grew full of apprehension of some critical operation or of total blindness. The Matriculation Examination was to take place on Tuesday, October 17th. As the day approached, the problem where the College fees were to come from rose up before me,



full of terror. Various ephemeral Dublin papers and magazines which printed my contributions disappeared into space, or into the Bankruptcy Court, before payments arrived, and our family expenses absorbed every shilling of my salary. To have stuffed my brain with all the intricate puzzles of the Law of Entails and the Pandects, and, at the last moment, find all the labour lost for want of a few contemptible guineas, was to rouse a feeling of despair which I did not fail to confide plentifully to the sympathetic bosom of my diary.

The day before the Examination had actually arrived when there happened a singular coincidence, of a kind not altogether rare in a life full of strange chances, happy and otherwise. Let my journal tell the tale :—

*Oct. 16th.* Had great hopes in a certain quarter of getting the money. Beaten again. Will make another great effort with D. A. N.,<sup>1</sup> but he tells me money is tight. It is my last chance for to-morrow.

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<sup>1</sup> Alderman D. A. Nagle, the managing proprietor of the *Herald*, who was twice Mayor of Cork and one of the wittiest of its witty citizens. Having contested Mallow for a seat in Parliament and got only seven votes, he good-humouredly said, "Well, there's one prayer I'll say devoutly all my life, *Libera nos a Mallow!*" During his mayoralty, Queenstown made a determined attempt to secede from Cork and establish a port authority of its own. There was question of a motto for the new flag of the seceding township. "Let me suggest one from Horace," said Mayor Nagle, "*Sine cortice nabit*—'twill swim without Cork." Nagle, who was a solicitor in large practice, did not himself escape from the inveterate gift of the Cork punster. Once when a bill of costs of his was under consideration, his friend Joe Ronayne cried out, "Of all the terrors of the law, commend me to a peck from the bill of *a nagle*." Even the Church was not spared by the "prime boys." An amiable and eloquent Arch-

Immediately underneath comes this postscript in lead pencil :—

*P.S.*—Hardly have I written the above when a letter is put into my hands from the owner of the *Boston Pilot*, enclosing a draft for £10 and inviting me to further contributions! No trouble remains for to-morrow but to get the draft cashed. Very, very grateful to Heaven, and yet not half enough ashamed of myself for my fears.

I won my Scholarship all right, although my competitors included two graduates of mature age and far better knowledge of law than I, who had come from the Belfast and Galway Colleges, as is the custom, to net the money prizes for which the Catholic South offered few claimants. Somewhat to my mortification, I was distanced for the £5 French Prize by a young fellow who had been brought up in the schools of France and Germany. The defeat was, however, more than compensated for by bringing me, for the first time, into contact

deacon, who had a special success in the aristocratic world of Montenotte, as the fashionable quarter of Cork is called, was popularly known as "the Apostle of the Genteels." The crowd was as ready as the professed wit. Once while a Member of Parliament at an election meeting was denouncing his opponents as "a party of pledge-breakers," he demanded, "Why, what are these men's pledges worth?" "Yerra, they would not give you the price of a pint for them at Hegarty's" (a well-known pawn-office), promptly replied a thirsty soul from the crowd, plainly a man experienced in the value both of pledges and porter. Nor have the humours of Cork died out. The day the present worthy member for Cork, Mr. Augustine Roche, an amiable and eligible bachelor, was installed as Lord Mayor of his native city, the new Lord Mayor, having returned thanks, cried out, "Next business, gentlemen!" "The next business," observed a grimy but gallant wit from the gallery, "is to select a Lady Mayoress."

with Charley Tanner, who in later times, as member for Mid-Cork, was one of the most picturesque of the blithe band who fought and fell in our Irish Iliad. He was at that time in the flower of his youth—handsome as an Antinous, with the muscle of a Roman wrestler.

I grieve to say the Queen's College never inspired me with any greater tenderness for her as an Alma Mater than a short sojourn in an inn would justify in the case of the landlady. It was a singular institution—so capable of great things, with its beautiful Elizabethan halls, and its really gifted staff of professors, but struck with utter sterility by the curse of English misgovernment which will for ever act in Ireland on Dr. Johnson's blunt Anglo-Saxon axiom, "In everything in which they differ with us, they are wrong." The President was one of the most eminent Irishmen of his generation, Sir Robert Kane, the author of the famous scientific tract on *The Industrial Resources of Ireland*; but either Sir Robert Kane was not living in his delightful Tudor residence, or at least I never saw him, eager though I should have been to do him worship. The Gaelic Professor, again, was the learned Mr. Owen Connellan, who edited the *Four Masters*; but he also had disappeared from view, and, although I would myself have gladly invoked his aid to help me over the stile of my lame Gaelic studies, I was the only student whimsical enough to think of such a thing, and, as



I was not an Arts student, I had no right to call him back to his chair. Our own Law and Jurisprudence classes consisted of four students, in a lonely corner of a vast class-room, and I always commiserated our two excellent Professors while they were unfolding their stores of learning to so diminutive an audience.<sup>1</sup>

The only thing I really loved about the College was its library; but here was all that youthful intellect could languish for—the mellow light and classic traceries of a cloister, with books enough, high up to the roof, to make one think life was not long enough to turn out their treasures to the sun. But the library did not serve to deepen my passion for the Law. Like Hylas, the Greek boy sent with his urn to the fount, who “neglected his task for the flowers on the way,” I turned gladly from the law shelves to the Elysian Fields of belles-lettres that spread world-wide around me, as far apart as Shakespeare from Béranger, or Burke’s august State papers from the sweet seclusion of the

<sup>1</sup> It must in justice be added that I never heard a word hurtful to religion fall from the lips of any Queen’s College professor. As for the students’ own *état d’âme*, those whom I knew, while they loved, like myself, to lose themselves in clouds of metaphysics, were firm in the faith of their fathers to their very heart-wood, while the effect on their politics is sufficiently described by the fact that there was a flourishing “Circle” of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood among the stalwart medical students from Limerick and Tipperary. The Cork Queen’s College, like all the rest of the elaborate plans for decatholicising and denationalising Ireland, gave England no better return for her pieces of silver than Balaam made to Balak when he was sent for to curse Israel.

Lake country; and went through just as much legal drudgery as was needful to earn my Scholarships, but no more. My appetite for reading was insatiable, but lawless. Dante, Tasso, and Ariosto I followed up with great enthusiasm, the first-named to remain for life a part of my intellectual being; I plodded on into Schiller's plays and even into the confines of Goethe, along the platitudinous road of Ollendorf. The Gaelic, as I have mentioned, had also some inexplicable charm for me, and I struggled with some persistency through the jagged, unpronounceable consonants of the Ossianic Society's Middle Irish texts, with the aid of O'Donovan's ponderous Grammar, which I found to be about as wise a proceeding as it would be to set about learning modern English conversation out of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*—as I found to my cost from my old nurse, who could not understand a word of the Middle Irish I stammered out, while in her own mouth all the rugged consonants, over which my tongue scrambled in despair, melted into a stream of liquid vowel-sounds. Two aphorisms from one of the mediæval Gaelic laments have haunted me a thousand times in subsequent years of struggle for Ireland. One was: "Linen shirts on the race of Con, and the foreigner all in a mass of iron"; and the other was: "It was never the Sassenach that lost the battle for the Gael, but the Gael that lost it for one another." They were the secrets of Ireland's ill-luck in battle, and still worse luck in council.

My pen went on all the time as feverishly busy as my eyes.

*April 20th (1872).* Another story on the stocks to be called *Kilsheelan ; or The Old Place and the New People*. Everything, including my eyes, warns me to wait until I have more writing power ; but reasoning goes for nothing in these matters.

The project, with many others, was cut untimely short.

*July 18th.* Two months have been blotted out of my year by a fit of small-pox, which went near blotting myself out also. Thank God, it has done me little harm—only settled my chance of this year's Scholarship. Went at my manuscript to-day ; found it very queer—the story and myself.

*Sept. 2nd.* Not a month, but four gone. It is only now I am settling down hard to work, but the Scholarship is gone and the Law, I think, with it. Twelve chapters of story finished ; it grows on me a little. Sight causes me greatest anxiety of all.

The twelve chapters written by the small-pox convalescent were promptly packed off to a publisher, with a prompt result :—

*Sept. 16th.* This ought to be written with a pen of gold. Smith, Elder, and Co. of London think so well of the portion of my story sent them that they ask for the remainder ! It is the first word of cheer I have ever had from London. I cannot do the thirty odd chapters in less than two months, but I'll do my best.

The story begun in a sick-room was hurried through at as furious a rate as could be managed by an author who morbidly and ridiculously pictured



to himself the great London publisher as waiting eagerly for "copy," and who wrote under the sword of increasing ill-health and the terror of a total loss of eyesight.<sup>1</sup> By October 19th I was able to write :

I've been able at last to send off ten chapters more of story. I think it grows interesting. It has been a time of hard work in the office, and what with that and a couple of hours for my books, I can hardly compose my nerves for a fit of enthusiasm when I must cool off again. If I had only a pair of good eyes again ! . . . A calamity from Boston. The *Pilot* has been burnt out with half the city, and with it, I fear, the prosperity of my best friends. How pitiful my grumbling in comparison !

The manuscript must have been completed within two months after, for under date "Jan. 1st (1873)" comes the following entry :—

A great blow is my new year's gift. I am reeling under it still—but not crushed. Smith, Elder, and Co. return the manuscript with some severe criticism and will have none of it. They may be right. We shall see. I have a suspicion that the *Irishness* of the story was its worst crime in their eyes. If so, I am glad they had

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<sup>1</sup> The right eye had grown affected with conical cornea and was almost useless, and the disease had spread to the other eye. Having been warned that a critical operation would be necessary to stop it, and that I was probably too weak to go through it and live, I made my way to the most eminent London surgeon-oculist of the day, Mr. Critchett in Harley Street, who gave me the joyful intelligence that the disease was due largely to over-exertion and constitutional delicacy, and might rather diminish of its own accord as I grew older. "The only prescription I shall give you is—eat, drink, and be merry," he said. "I suppose, sir," I observed, "you are too kind to add, 'For to-morrow you die !'" "So shall we all," he said with a cheery laugh. "You have as good a chance of a long day as I have." In all of which my eminent adviser, whom I have long outlived, proved to be right.

cause to reject it. Have sent off the manuscript to Chapman and Hall, who will, of course, reject for the same reason, if there be no other.

Reading over the really sympathetic and judicious letter of Messrs. Smith, Elder, and Co.'s Reader, in later years, I found the suspicion by which irate adolescence avenged itself to be quite unjust. The Reader only thought of the story what I thought of it myself a couple of years afterwards. Its subsequent fortunes are only notable for an example of Irish persistency (no matter what our censors may say) under every discouragement of ill-health, narrow means, coldness from English publishers, and bankruptcy or mischance blighting the friendliness of Irish ones. Sometimes, indeed, after months of peregrination from one shut publisher's door to another, that taunting voice: "Where's the use of it all?" which lurks for ever by the enthusiast's bed, would echo through all the desolate infinities of the soul, and my despair would seek comfort in some extravagantly tragic confidence to my diary. For example:—

*May 10th.* Three months' haggling with publishers, English and Irish, and for result—sick, sick, sick! As ill-luck should have it, the Boston *Pilot* people, who had promised to publish it, have been burnt out again. I'm tired of literature, tired of politics, tired of sickness, tired of life. I am too bad to be good (as I should so pine to be), and too good to be bad (as there is constantly danger).

But adolescence need not take its despair too tragically, any more than its anger. Youth and stubborn hope would promptly reassert themselves, as in this entry of the following day :—

*May 11th.* *Re* above—Bosh! Men are here for something better than to whine. Off with the manuscript again on its travels—this time to Chapman and Hall.

*Kilsheelan* in the end subsided peacefully into an Irish weekly paper, where it was published anonymously. It must have struck a certain chord, for I afterwards found it republished in the Buenos Ayres *Southern Cross*, and in a Montreal magazine, the *Harp*, where they paid it the superb but quite unmerited compliment of attributing the authorship to the delightful Tipperary romancist, Charles Kickham (another of the aerial Irishmen of genius for whom Dublin Castle could find no meeter reward than a sentence of twenty years' penal servitude).

In 1874 the breakdown of my health grew more and more alarming, and for more than twenty years to come made my life an incessant struggle between bodily languor and a strong will. To complete the misfortunes of the household, the malady began to develop which ended by sweeping away every member of my family except myself. My elder brother, James, who had got re-employed with a firm of shipping agents, had to undergo the winter hardships of the wild Irish seas, and even his frame of iron, already



tried by his night adventures in the importation of arms, began to be mined by a cough which would not be silenced. My younger brother, Dick, was blest also with a constitution of extraordinary hardiness. His passion was sport. He would start off at midnight with his fishing-rod to reach the Ahadillane river, fifteen miles away, by daybreak, and would tramp through the water up to his knees all day, and arrive home during the night, having had no better refection than a chunk of bread carried in his basket, with the addition, possibly, of a trout broiled in some peasant's cabin. In the sister joys of rabbit and rat hunting he had an inseparable ally in an old gentleman, got up in a rabbit-skin cap and clothes of the utmost poverty, who, nevertheless, was a baronet of ancient foundation, Sir Emmanuel M——, and in his rags a sweetly courteous gentleman still. The queerly-assorted pair were a source of amused interest to me, as they set out on one of their expeditions, with their dogs and their ferrets—the boy fuller of respect for the old man's ferret lore than for his title, and Sir Emmanuel listening with a profound deference to Dick's sage conclusions as to the fence that would be worth hunting, or the holes where there might be a chance of a fox. One of my poor Dick's tramps through the river was too much for him. He contracted a prolonged rheumatic fever, from which his heart and lungs never wholly recovered. My sister Maggie, again, began to grow pale and

complain of a haunting cough, or rather to suffer it without complaining, for during nearly four years of uninterrupted suffering a word of complaint never passed her gentle lips. Finally, my mother, who bore the weight of all our separate ailments in addition to sorrows of her own, was only prevented from becoming the fifth invalid of the family by the necessity for forgetting herself in care for all the rest.

Many an hour has been spent since in bitter self-reproach for my stupidity—purblind bookworm that I was—in not observing all these things sooner. Fondly though we were all bound together by the closest family attachment, we were all to a great extent affected by that most unwise reserve which makes one ashamed to make much spoken demonstration of affection, and I was little taken into confidence as to the troubles of the household, as I took nobody into confidence as to my own. Owing to the irregularity of my reporting hours, I nearly always dined by myself late in the day, and I have a shrewd suspicion now that all the cares of the kitchen were concentrated upon my own entertainment, little though it was noticed at the time, owing to the bad Irish habit of paying little attention to what one eats (or sometimes whether one eats at all, for that matter). The feast was a simple one enough—generally not more than a mutton cutlet—but it was a cutlet with a frosted crust of gold, and some dainty accompaniment of lemon-pudding, or jelly of Carrigeen moss, which somehow

carried an exquisite flavour of motherly solicitude and of sisterly refinement (for my sister was a famous cook). In after days the question often tormented me whether their own meals were equally appetising? It was, indeed, only the woman's instinct of self-sacrifice which forbade them to enjoy a life of modest comfort; for, what with all my varied earnings from regular newspaper work, irregular literary scribbling, and College prizes, even during the period while I was the only *soutien de famille* poverty never visited us in any really repulsive shape.

The agony of doubt as to whether I should be able to raise the £8 matriculation fees was the most serious pecuniary embarrassment of my life, and is, indeed, the only money trouble of any kind I can remember since days when I was too young to understand what money troubles meant. Throughout my life I have acted upon the three principles of spending whatever I had, much or little, of never getting into debt, and consequently of keeping no bank account, for the good reason that there was nothing to account for. The result being that whether the income was great or small the balance-sheet was equally satisfactory. I am very far, indeed, from recommending for general imitation a rule of conduct so improvident. If I had not been so quickly and so long left alone in the world, each of the three principles would have infallibly come to grief; but in the special circumstances of my life it so happened



that, amidst almost every other conceivable form of distress and danger, the only pecuniary troubles that have ever given me a pang have been the troubles of other people. For one other blessing I owe Providence a debt of gratitude which all the treasures of the Incas could not pay. It is, that all my women relatives, without exception, have justified the seemingly impossible ideals of the sex with which I set out in life; and, for the sake of human nature, I am rejoiced to think the experience cannot be an uncommon one, since, applying to my circle of friends the test of the sweetness, purity, and unselfishness which have blessed my own home, I have seen nothing to shake my faith in the diffusion of similar inborn charms in the sex in general, after nearly half a century of a rough world's disenchantments in other respects.

The horrors of insomnia soon came to complete my physical breakdown, and, fast upon the track of the insomnia, a cure which only increased its horrors. Hydrate of chloral had only just been discovered, and its vogue as a cure for all the ills of man was at its height. A not very judicious physician prescribed it as a remedy for my sleeplessness. To one oppressed by the nightly procession of "the dread hours clothed in black" the relief of sinking languorously to rest in the arms of the Green Goddess was, in the beginning, an indescribable luxury. As I was wholly ignorant of the nature of the terrible drug, the temptation to continue and increase the dose was

irresistible. But the awakening soon enabled me to understand what the unfortunate Baudelaire meant when he described his head as "a sick volcano." My own homelier sensation was of a harrow being drawn slowly across the brain and back again. Soon, as I walked through the streets, a megrim would suddenly set my brain spinning, and I would have to grasp at a railing or lean against a door to prevent myself from falling. I began to experience all De Quincey's horrible symptoms.

The method I took to deliver myself from the drug while there was yet time required a certain resoluteness of purpose and brought much suffering for a time. It was to undertake long walks far into the night, in order to produce by mere exhaustion the same effect that the chloral did by its easy and voluptuous, but deadly spell. These walks were taken mostly on the western side of the city, and extended over twenty, thirty, and even forty miles of a night, once stretching as far as the town of Macroom and back, a walk to Blarney being reckoned a mere *hors d'œuvre* of a night's bill of fare.

Most of my friends of those years were students or newspaper men, as unconventional as myself,<sup>1</sup> who

<sup>1</sup> Another, and one of the dearest, was (and is) the Rev. P. F. Kavanagh, the Franciscan, a Wexford man, best known as the author of *The History of the Insurrection of 1798*, in which his relatives bore a heroic part. He was one of the dreamiest and most simple-hearted of men, ready for a sublime martyrdom either for Faith or Fatherland, but too modest not to keep even that unselfish ambition shrinkingly concealed in his heart. Father Kavanagh was not, however, my confessor, but a saintly Italian Father of the Capuchin

would be content to walk by the hour declaiming metaphysics, poetry, and biography, but drew the line at these seven-leagued-boots' expeditions by night in search of sleep. Accordingly, after my day's reporting, College lectures, reading, or scribbling, I would set out alone at seven or eight o'clock in the evening, along the beautifully wooded banks of the Lee, and spend four, five, or six hours on the road, fighting down the mocking spirit of the hydrate of chloral. Two extracts taken from my journal will give a sufficient glimpse of my usual thoughts and adventures on the way.

I. From the Dyke I could see the lights in the two Palaces<sup>1</sup> of Madness on the right and of Crime on the left, and had some gruesome thoughts how little separated me from either of them. . . . Later on the moon came out over those darling valleys of the Lee which I have come to love only less than — River, woods, blue, blue sky in frostwork frame of silvery clouds—it was as if

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Community, a being so etherealised that snuff seemed to be his only earthly nutriment. I hope that his imperfect knowledge of English did not count for me among his attractions as a confessor, but my experiences were sometimes sweetly humorous. After I had told my tale in fear and trembling, he would interrogate me as to any iniquities I might have forgotten, as thus: "Did you rob anything?" "Did you beat your faader?" This was easy ground, but the rising smile was instantly chastened by some such little homily as this: "Dat is fery good. But Christ did more for you dan your faader. He is your God and He did die for you, and it was your sins and mine did kill Him." And I came away with the vivid impression that it was *mine* and not *his* that were really enormous enough to be worth sorrowing for.

<sup>1</sup> The County Jail, in which, indeed, it was my fortune afterwards to pass eventful days, is a conspicuous building on one side of the Western Road, and the vast District Lunatic Asylum crowns a hill on the opposite side.



heaven was opening. If it only *would*, and let us hear just one word of cheer, what a world it would be! and how easily we might dispense with the jails and mad-houses! For shame! Were the incredulous Jews any worse, when they wagged their heads and cried out: 'If Thou be the son of God, come down from the Cross'? The heavens, forsooth, must open for every fool who won't be content to fall down and know his littleness. *Nisi efficiamini sicut parvuli*—is it not wisdom enough for a half-crazed nocturnal Rambler? What an ingenious torture-chamber is this poor brain-pan of ours, which, in this scene, all of beauty and restfulness, must fasten on the only thought that is unpleasant and disquieting?

2. Found myself a little after twelve at the gate of Curraghkipawn<sup>1</sup> and waited for ghosts. Horribly frightened, but determined to hold my ground. The silence was really as awful as anything else could be. But there was nothing else. Came away after waiting nearly an hour, and found my legs trembling. Got home by four, but it was not worth while going to bed before the Kilmallock train.

Hydrate of chloral never passed my lips again. The process of cure was, perhaps, the greatest feat of will-power of my life—next to the creation of my toy army and its wars. The power of sleep gradually returned, and remained my sheet-anchor during many tempestuous years. The habit of walking immense distances is perhaps to be thanked for a certain hardiness and staying-power which has mingled strangely with my incessant, and sometimes almost moribund, weakness of body. Doubtless these solitary night rambles are answerable also for

<sup>1</sup> A lonely graveyard on a height, some five miles from Cork.

an ever-growing preference for retirement and avoidance of the world's noisy ways. No trace of misanthropy ever in the least embittered this sense of unfitness for society. I had, on the contrary, the warmest delight in seeing others, and especially those whom the French call the *petit peuple*, enjoy themselves, and could I have enveloped myself in the fabled coat of darkness, would have joyfully lingered in the midst of their festivities.

My fear was rather the morbidly self-conscious one of boring people, and of timidly counting the hours over which the duty of entertaining them might extend. I think reading of the sparkling nights of Pope and Bolingbroke, and of Johnson's and Burke's godlike encounters of wit at the Club, led me to form impossible ideals of what conversation ought to be in order to make social life worth living; and I have never been altogether disabused of the illusion, notwithstanding the superabundant evidence of real life that an honest fat-wits is more generally popular than a sayer of brilliant things.

A misanthropist in Cork City would indeed be an unaccountable animal. Its people would coax Timon of Athens himself into good humour. They are a people in a most singular degree *facile à vivre*, neighbourly, soft-mannered, sunny-hearted—the citizens of a pious Paris, with all the Parisian vivacity and no sting of the Parisian *diablerie*—gifted, as I once tried to describe them, with a mellifluous accent and a caressing

tenderness which make the welcome of the people of Cork to those they love the most seductive music in the world.<sup>1</sup> In any case, my newspaper occupations perforce saved me from retiring wholly into my cloudland. Without any volition of my own, it so happened that I came to be acquainted with almost every hamlet in Munster, and with an incredibly large number of its people, when all my natural cravings would have banished me into some wilderness with my book and pen.

As time went on, however, our little home grew more and more to be a house of sickness. A great lethargy seemed to be settling down over my life ;

<sup>1</sup> Even their quarrels have an element of good-fellowship. Once the physical-force men tried to capture Parnell on one of his earliest visits to Cork, in order to stifle the constitutional movement at its birth, but finding the crowd who met Parnell at Blarney Station too formidable, turned their attack on one of his foremost friends in Cork, who had shortly before proposed a resolution pointing out the folly of a recent raid for arms. Producing their revolvers, they insisted he should get down from the carriage by Parnell's side. He was a man of magnificent physique, and although for peace sake he complied, he stood facing with his umbrella the couple of dozen somewhat desperate-looking men who, with their revolvers presented in his face, surrounded him on the road. "Come," he cried, "pitch away your revolvers and come inside the ditch and I'll fight the best three men among ye." Late that evening I visited the smoke-room of the Victoria Hotel, where the revolver men and the object of the outrage sat amicably discussing the day's doings. "There's no use in talking, Con," the latter remarked, "you were the worst divel of the lot." "Well, sure, we were always good friends, John," replied the gentleman of the revolver party, "and why didn't you leave it to the Peelers to find fault with the boys for the Passage Raid?" "Yerra, there are no bones broke," cried out a third. "Name your drinks, boys, and we'll all sing 'God Save Ireland' and have done with it." Which was accordingly done. The man who that day stoutly faced the revolvers, Alderman John O'Brien, lived to be thrice Mayor of Cork and one of the best beloved of all his genial fellow-citizens.



but I had still energy enough left to heed the doctor's warning that total change of life and scene was now the best of all prescriptions. Some social sketch I had written of Cork had the good fortune to attract the attention of Mr. Edmund Dwyer Gray, the proprietor of the *Freeman's Journal*, then in the full force of his youth and enterprise. At his invitation, I accepted a post on his great paper, and bade farewell to Cork, little suspecting in the remotest corner of my soul that I should live to be welcomed back with honour and affection to "The Beautiful Citie," where I was only too content to float through life in the same gentle obscurity in which "the pleasant waters of the River Lee" make their way through the verdant woodlands to the great sea.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE 'FREEMAN'S JOURNAL'

1876-1880

It was no fault of my colleagues if my four years on the *Freeman's Journal* staff were not as light-hearted as they were easy. A blither band, or a wittier, never lit up a table at Button's or the Mitre Tavern. "The Chief," the late Mr. Theophilus MacWeeney, might have been Lord Chancellor, if he had been a lawyer and if he had not been an inveterate lover of fun. His fine head, with its crown of tossing curls, as he sat at the head of the revels in the reporters' room, would have adorned a full-bottomed wig, so solemn were its lines and so massive the expanse of forehead, only for the grin of benevolent merriment that would steal out of his blue eyes as, with a parental fondness, he watched his young barbarians all at play. The Chief was by no means an old man when he died, but for his existing colleagues he had been an institution in the *Freeman* office so long beyond living memory, that he was much chaffed about his age. "Theophilus," one of the leader-writers, "Dick" Adams,<sup>1</sup> would ask (he alone had

<sup>1</sup> As County Court Judge of Limerick, where his solid good sense and rough justice have secured for him, in an extraordinary degree,

the courage to address him by that sacro-sanct title), "is it the fact that you were flogged by Major Sirr for your report of the arrest of Lord Edward Fitzgerald?" "My dear Richard," the Chief would imperturbably reply, "reserve your curiosity. You will be in a position to ascertain the fact for yourself from the Major one of these days, whenever the devil gets his due." Adams' shafts were directed as freely against himself as at any of the circle of friends who loved or feared him. After a long series of Liberal victories in 1888, there was a turn of the tide in favour of the Tories, and Adams, who was a somewhat vacillating Whig, with certain mild Nationalist leanings not inconsistent with the pursuit of a place, was observed in an unusually gloomy mood by the group around the library fire at the Four Courts.

"Still thinking of the —— election, eh, Adams?" asked one of the seniors. "Yes," was the reply, "I was just thinking whether I haven't got down at the wrong side of the fence."

He used to give this description of three of the most aggressively Nationalist members of the staff: "O'B. is the sentimental Fenian, R.

the confidence of all classes, Adams continues to be one of the most unconventional and humorous of judicial personages. When asked if the Court would adjourn over the Easter holidays, he astonished the Bar with the reply, "Who ever heard of a Judge sitting on Good Friday since Pontius Pilate?" On another occasion he decided a right-of-way case, sitting by the side of a fence on the site in dispute. Another morning he horrified the judicious and delighted the hearts of the injudicious by leaning over the bench, after his arrival, and asking *urbi et orbi*: "Will some gent kindly lend the Court a 'bob' to pay my Jehu?"



is the comic Fenian, and O.'S. is the bloody Fenian." The staff included a priest and a parson, both of them men of the sweetest and most exemplary character, and miracles of gentle toleration. The latter, the Rev. Mr. Carroll, Rector of St. Bride's, who used to contribute quaint old historic papers, the product of his excavations in Marsh's Library and Trinity College, dressed so like a priest that he was popularly known as "Father Carroll." "When will we have you inviting us to your first mass, Father Carroll?" the Chief once asked, in a quizzing humour. "My dear man," was the reply, "it puts me to the pin of my collar to believe all I have to believe as a plain Protestant Clerk."

The clergymen were but day-visitants, however. It was only by gaslight, late in the night, the merry company was to be seen at its best round the ugly deal table, from Lefroy, the principal leader-writer, the brilliant but mordant ironist, and Guinee,<sup>1</sup> most

<sup>1</sup> W. B. Guinee of Cork, afterwards a highly successful London journalist and author. His imagination made it so fatally easy for him to soar into all sorts of wild flights, much more interesting to read of than prosaic facts, that he contracted a sovereign contempt for mere accuracy, and, half in a tricky humour, but never in malice, sometimes treated his readers to the most outrageous extravaganzas related in solemn earnest. When the body of the murdered Lord Naas reached Dublin, Guinee gave a superb description of the military arrangements for the funeral, and of the vast open square of Coldstream Guards formed for the reception of the coffin. On this majestic scene his Puck humour suddenly introduced a vagabond bull-dog that rushed into the centre of the square, made a ferocious attack from behind upon one of the officers collected in a group in the centre, and, to the horror of the assembled multitude, made off with a tremendous mouthful of the unfortunate officer's bleeding flesh. When he had worked up the horror to its height, Guinee proceeded to

daringly imaginative of the "descriptive men," down to the unfortunate junior whom the Chief designated as "the lowest joint of the editorial tail," with the occasional irruption of a Lord Mayor on his way home from a banquet, or an actor who dropped in after the theatre, or a privileged politician who called around to revise his speech; and there the fun would go on, fast and furious, until the editor, Mr. J. B. Gallaher, would throw open the door and, with a face clothed with thunder, would burst forth: "Adams, are we to announce we have dropped leading articles in this paper to-morrow morning, and dispensed with the services of the gentlemen who used to write them?" and then, softened in the genial glow of the company, would himself relax into some old reminiscence of the day he "consecrated" this or that Archbishop, or of the night when he—even he—most reverend and cautiously whiggish of men of peace, went to Newgate Prison to take part in a rescue of John Mitchel.<sup>1</sup>

Edmund Dwyer Gray, the proprietor, was the most enterprising newspaper man Ireland ever pro-

relieve the public anxiety by relating that, happily, the bull-dog had only carried off a bleeding beefsteak which the officer was carrying home for breakfast, and which he had stowed away in a tail-pocket!

<sup>1</sup> For a quarter of a century Gallaher steered the *Freeman* through a thousand dangers with an instinct akin to genius. Its interests were his supreme law. Once, when the *Freeman* began to coquet with Land League doctrines, a veteran Whig journalist raised a voice of remonstrance. "What is the *Freeman* coming to," he remarked, "to play the game of a gang like that?" "My dear Ferdinand," was the solemn reply, "the country is going to the devil, and the *Freeman* is bound to go with the country."

duced. Next to Parnell, his loss was the most serious blow that fell on Ireland in this generation, and in the capacity for business on a vast scale he was Parnell's superior. He would have been a historic Chancellor of the Exchequer. As so often happens in the case of English judgments of Irishmen, the House of Commons was the last place in the world where they would have suspected him of genius. He had a thin, piping voice, and made a poor figure in the dramatic suspension-scenes of which Irish Parliamentary life then so largely consisted. The only time I ever heard him at his best in the House of Commons was once on the Post Office Estimates, when he made a plea for the Government purchase of telephones, then in the infancy of their development—a plea which, if it had been heard, would have revolutionised the whole system of rapid communications ten years before the rest of the world mastered his fore-knowledge of the telephone. It was in a thin house, but those who heard him that night listened with amazement to one of the most brilliant masters of figures that ever shone even upon an assembly accustomed to Gladstone. He was half a generation before his time also in the appreciation of linotypes; and in all the bolder schemes of Dublin municipal enterprise—where the feebler staggered at the expense or trembled before the clamour of the ignorant or interested—he bore a timid and a dazzled Corporation on his back, like the roc in the *Arabian Nights*, to the Valley of Diamonds in the distance.



But his imagination was engrossed wholly in business. In the purely political sphere he stumbled in the dark, groping for guidance. He once collided with Parnell, in the earlier stages of that great man's development, and may have possibly, for the moment, ambitioned to be the first among his countrymen, as he was unquestionably marked out by Nature to be the second. But he was quite free from malice and accepted hard facts with an almost extravagant readiness. Many years afterwards, in my bedroom in the Imperial Hotel, on the eve of the luckless Galway election, when Mr. Healy urged Gray to disregard Parnell's approval of the candidature of Captain O'Shea, and, if necessary, take the field against him in the *Freeman*, I remember Gray's good-humoured reply, while his large dark eyes gleamed with fun, and his hand twitched at his chin-tuft, as was his wont, when deliberating: "My dear Healy, I once tried a fall with Parnell and got the worst of it. I'm not going to try it any more." The chief source of his weakness, however, was a certain want of faith which came, with other weaknesses, from an ill-directed youthful training. In the words of a keen observer of men, "he was a *cui bono* man," or rather, he possessed in a splendid degree the vigour of mind capable of taking delight in great projects and even in great dangers, but at some critical stage his faith in himself or in the general scheme of things would all of a sudden fail him, and, in political affairs especially, he would accept

the blind degree of Destiny with an indulgent scepticism.

My personal relations with him were those of warm friendship and even affection. Any contribution, even slightly remarkable, made to the *Freeman* was sure to be followed by a handsome cheque, accompanied by a few words of infinitely greater value. He pressed me hard to become a regular leader-writer for the paper; but, apart from the drawbacks of incessant illness, the views of the *Freeman* were sometimes (and for reasons which the vastness of the property at stake easily suggested) of too indecisive a hue in National crises to make it possible for me to undertake any personal responsibility for them. While he reigned at the Mansion House as Lord Mayor of Dublin he was in the flower of manhood and in the full glow of his luminous intellect—rich, handsome, courted, and, above all, blessed with a wife whose beauty and inexpressible charm enhanced tenfold her husband's popularity, and who, when the first conflict of the Land League cycle broke forth between the Court of Dublin Castle and the Mansion House, made even the small-souled *snobinettes* of Dublin society hesitate between the worthy Duchess who presided at the Castle and the gracious lady who lit up the Mansion House festivities like a Fairy Queen.

With such an employer and such comrades, it may be guessed that, for ease and outward brightness, life on the *Freeman* left little to be desired.

Once in a way, in some special emergency, I would gird up my loins for a great effort, on the strength of which weeks and months would pass in smooth and indolent calms. For example, my frequent "marking" was for half-a-dozen of the Courts, from each of which, by a system of exchange with reporters and barristers, what was called "a fat paragraph" was to be obtained. To one of my own sensitive texture, hours of hard labour evolved out of my own head would be preferable to lolling about Courts for scraps of information, depending upon the complacency of busy or insolent men (for the reporting profession was still in the statusless condition in which the reporter, within one circuit of the clock, might be fawned upon by the very highest and snubbed by the very lowest).

But a wave of the Chief's wand would transform this task from a day of servitude to a day of lazy luxury. His own duty being confined to seeing the work of the staff efficiently done (and Napoleon had never a better grip of his Marshals), the Chief, instead of consigning me for the day to the Four Courts, would carry me off on the top of a tramcar to the foot of the Dublin Mountains, or the breezy shores under Howth Head, chatting all the time of some famous lawsuit, illustrated by a marvellous mimicry of the chief actors therein; or would lead the way to some quaint corner of old Dublin, where Swift was born, or where Grattan had his town-house, or where Sir Bernard Burke kept his little



treasure-house of heraldic curiosities, under the hoary Bermingham Tower of Dublin Castle, or where the heads of the Brothers Sheares in the vaults of St. Michan's were still as well preserved as the day they were hanged (for his memory was an encyclopædia of pre-Union knowledge); then would return for his afternoon cup of coffee and buttered scone at his favourite coffee-shop, where he would have his joke with the delightful Professor Galbraith on the humours of the Home Rule movement, or chaff Brother Nunn on the mysteries of the Imperial Black Preceptory of Orangemen, of which he was a Grand Master; after which he and I would stroll up leisurely past the book-shops of the quays to the Four Courts, and he would plant himself against one of the statues in the hall, as the Courts were breaking up, and, in the course of ten minutes, had my day's work in his hands, signalling to the barristers as they went past to disgorge their contributions, with observations such as: "Anything in the Master's to-day, O'Shaugh?"—"Well, Peter, I'm told you down'd the Big Serjeant?"—"Just ten lines of that *Jarndyce v. Jarndyce* case of yours in the Rolls, Val"; or (in a confidential whisper to a young barrister blushing in his first Breach of Promise action) "Glad you won your verdict, Luke. Have you got the little MS.?" (his affectionate way of alluding to a pocket-speech). Better than all else, the dear old Chief was a pearl beyond price as a friend and adviser, being indeed one of the only

two men (Alderman Hooper of Cork being the other) I ever met with whom a consultation meant the certainty of wise guidance in the most knotty difficulty.

Betimes, however, I atoned for those summer hours by tasks of some magnitude, and of a certain influence over the fortunes of the paper. One of these was the investigation of a historic agrarian struggle on an estate around the Galtee Mountains, the results of which were published in a series of letters entitled "Christmas on the Galtees." It was to me memorable as affording me the first intimate and never-to-be-forgotten insight into the horrible realities of the Irish Land question. From the knowledge then acquired I date that persuasion that Landlordism is the deepest root of Irish misery, which has been one of the two inspiring influences of my public life, and which makes the abolition of that fatal institution a sufficient recompense for whatever penalties the long wrestle with Landlordism and the powers behind it has cost me. It was the case of a poor mountainous estate, jobbed about in the Incumbered Estates Court from one land speculator to another, until it reached the hands of a wealthy English manufacturer, Mr. Nathaniel Buckley. Gladstone's well-intended Land Act of 1870, far from protecting the miserable tenants, whose own toil and capital had given the soil three-fourths of whatever value it possessed, only stimulated the English speculator to evade the Act by revaluing the property, and in most instances

doubling and even trebling the rents, by reason of the tenants' own improvements.

They were as inoffensive a population as inhuman cruelty could select for its victims. The wrong would probably never have been articulately heard of, only for the accident that a Tipperary man named Ryan, of the true dogged breed, married into a family on the estate and settled down there. This man soon made himself audible by the old, desperate expedient of the blunderbuss. He fired into the face of the agent in his own grounds, and the agent was only saved by the fact that the charge of powder was insufficient to make the pellets penetrate. He next, with an old man, a brother Tipperary man named Crowe, lay in wait for the agent and his police-escort on the Mitchelstown Road, and riddled the car with pellets, killing a bailiff and wounding the agent and a policeman.

In the invariable Irish way, the grotesque mingles with the horrible in the exploits of this desperado. The agent's house at Galtee Castle was situate at a point at which the three counties of Tipperary, Limerick, and Cork touch. The assassin could have waylaid the agent with safety in a wood shading the Tipperary portion of the avenue, but, as the law directed the blood fine for agrarian murder to be levied off the county in which the crime took place, his loyalty to Tipperary forbade him to impose this penalty on his fellow-countymen. He accordingly stationed himself in the Limerick



section of the avenue, when he discharged his first blunderbuss, and the Limerick ratepayers had to pay £800 for his attempt. On the occasion of the next sanguinary affray, he and his brother-assassin pitched the scene on the County Cork road, and the ratepayers of that county were mulcted in a sum of £2000 compensation to the victims. Tipperary, however, paid in blood what it escaped in coin; for the overcharged blunderbuss burst in the hands of the old man, Crowe, and he was captured and hanged for the murder of the bailiff. I was present when the old fellow marched up to the scaffold in Cork Jail with an unfaltering step. "Well," he remarked to one of the warders on the morning of his execution, "God's will be done! It was the wrong man, and I'm sorry for it." His principal, Ryan, who was a man of powerful physique and of extraordinary daring, remained for several years afterwards around the Galtee Mountains, in the midst of his police pursuers, in the hope of arranging another ambushade, and did not take his departure for America until the agency was surrendered and the entire dispute happily adjusted.

Mr. John Sarsfield Casey, who, as a boy, underwent five years' penal servitude as a Fenian, was living in the neighbourhood, and, greatly daring, attempted to substitute the pen for the blunderbuss as the palladium of the defenceless tenantry. He published a manly protest against the attempt of the wealthy absentee land-jobber to turn a Land Act,

intended for these poor people's protection, into an instrument for doubling and trebling the impost laid on their own improvements. The law, which failed to lay hands on Ryan, promptly proceeded to gag the newspaper-writer. It was the old story of free licence for the carrion-crows and vengeance on the doves, which sums up the whole history of misgovernment in Ireland. Mr. Casey was tried in the Court of Queen's Bench for criminal libel, and was only saved by the disagreement of the jury. But the failure of the Dublin prosecution was to be avenged by the immediate eviction of forty-seven families, who concluded they might as well throw up their arms in despair at once as undertake to pay the increased rents. The question arose, Was this process of barbarism to be carried out without any further voice of protest from public opinion?

Gray commissioned me to proceed to the estate, probe the truth to the bottom, and publish the results, whatever they might be, without fear or favour. His determination was not without perils for the proprietor of a great newspaper. According to the current doctrine of the Irish Courts, it was libellous and illegal to comment at all on a landlord's management of his own property; and while every sentence had to be written under the sword of that danger from the landlord side, there was the still more awful risk that another discharge from Ryan's blunderbuss might any day replace the terrors of a suit for libel by the most appalling charges in a

criminal court. The results of my inquiry were thus summarised in the preface to the pamphlet in which the letters from the Galtees were subsequently published :

I approached the estate prepared to find that there had been more clamour than was just over the misery of the tenantry ; I left it in despair of ever being able adequately to put before the eyes of the public, for their pity and indignation, the shameful scenes which passed under my own eyes, in a time of peace and in the name of law.

The inquiry was original in this sense, that it was, so far as I know, the first time when, in place of general statements, there was substituted a house-to-house visitation, telling in detail the story of every family, their crops, their stock, their debts, their struggle for life, from documents examined on the premises, and in words taken down in shorthand from the peasants' own lips. Two hundred and twenty-six households on the Galtee estate were thus visited, one by one, and the statements of thirty other tenants were inquired into. It was a saying of Disraeli's that "there is a romance in every life." Assuredly, with whatever dismay one might shrink from the monotony of those 226 successive stories, and the hideous weight of misery that darkened them all, I found each separate drama, as it unfolded itself in these 226 Irish interiors, so passionately absorbing in interest, so eloquent of injustice meekly endured, and lifelong industry cruelly repaid, and withal so happily relieved in its darkest shades by



the people's own picturesque words, by their indescribable traits of mystic religious fervour, their gracious hospitality, and the humour which is akin to tears, that the task of endeavouring to relate it all in its apparent sameness but infinite variety never cost me a weary moment.

My report concluded with the following appeal to public opinion :—

This, then, is the issue—whether a quiet, pious, simple race, whose own hands have made the barren places give forth food, are to be driven from their poor shelter, or forced to undergo burdens which are in reality a species of veiled eviction, in order to add one paltry thousand more to the revenues of a princely stranger. Time was when, in those distant glens, a wrong like this might have been done and nothing have been heard of it, save some maddened wretch sent to the gallows, some procession of houseless paupers, some emigrant ship gone down. That time is, one may hope, passed. The public opinion which has stricken down outrage, has arms long enough to reach its causes. Wise rulers will not fail to see with joy how eagerly a people just awakening to the power of law, in the sense of justice, have carried their appeal to that tribunal. Irish opinion has already spoken, and will speak again ; from the highest judgment-seat words of unequivocal sound have come, without staying the process of “settlement.” There is a hope remaining, even should Irish voices fall on heedless ears. One wave of that English opinion, before which Cabinets have fallen and nationalities been raised up—one generous impulse, such as was at the call of undeserved human misery in Bulgaria—would either end this unhappy strife or sweep away for ever the law which allows it ; and no Irish agent need ever again sleep in dagger-proof blankets, nor an Irish tenant oscillate between murder and the poorhouse.

Let those who wonder at the ingrained Irish belief, that nothing is to be had from supplications to their rulers, but everything from their fears, bethink them how vain was the appeal to justice and humanity on behalf of the Galtee peasants. Those were the days of freedom from agitation, which guileless Englishmen suppose to be days of unclouded bliss for Ireland and of all good gifts from England. The people had no organisation and no leaders; and the result, of course, was that no relief came to the Galtee estate, or to any other, until, a couple of years later, the Land League Revolution shook the earth and extorted, even from the most far-sighted and humane Englishman of his generation, Gladstone's famous confession after he came into office in 1880:

I frankly admit I did not know, no one knew, the severity of the crisis that was already swelling upon the horizon, and that shortly after rushed upon us like a flood.

If such was the ignorance of English statesmanship in its highest embodiment, who can be surprised if, in the cabins among the Galtee Mountains, there was sometimes a weary suspicion that the only really effective force of public opinion lay in the crack of Ryan's blunderbuss?

Not, indeed, that the story of these poor people failed to elicit an abundance of sympathy in Ireland, and even among individual Englishmen. The Very Reverend Dr. Delany, their devoted parish priest, who had accompanied me in all my wanderings

through the mountains, and under the spell of whose sacred influence alone I could have penetrated so deeply into the people's hearts, wrote me under date May 14th, 1878:—

I don't think you have any idea of the effect produced by last winter's letters. I received letters from all parts of the world in reference to them. An English peer, who has large estates in Ireland, sent me in confidence a fierce letter denouncing Buckley and Bridge (the agent), and a cheque for £5 : 5s. for the tenants. Orangemen of the deepest tint, officers of every grade, and policemen from all parts of the country, sent me assistance in every shape and form. The English peer to whom I alluded wants to know when the letters will be published in pamphlet form, as he requires thirty copies, and I know many who have written to me in confidence would be delighted to have one.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The late Mr. Justice William O'Brien, who had been an old friend of my father, was as enthusiastic about the Galtee letters as the English peer, and growled out, "If you don't publish them in a pamphlet, I'll publish them myself, whether you like or no." Judge O'Brien, who was soured by his defeat at the Ennis election, where he had stood as a Home Ruler, and afterwards by the crimes of the Invincibles' Conspiracy, which had marked him out for assassination, developed into one of the most infuriated enemies of the Irish Cause—to Ireland's heavy loss, for under a gnarled surliness of appearance he concealed vast ability and a good heart. The story is told at the Library fire that the Judge, who was a great book-lover, was one day absorbed in the treasures of an Edinburgh book-stall, when the plain-clothes Irish policeman who always accompanied him glided up and told him a crowd was gathering to observe him. The Judge and his escort moved away, under the impression they were escaping from a group of Invincibles, and did not suspect that the owner of the book-stall had mistaken the Judge's grim hatchet face and funereal black clothes for those of the public executioner, who had been performing one of his tasks in Edinburgh that morning, repeating with wonder to the curious observers: "Hey, mon, who'd have thocht it? 'Twas a volume of *The Ettrick Shepherd* the black fellow was speerin', jest as douce as if he'd ne'er cracked a neck."



In another letter Dr. Delany wrote :

I received, some weeks ago, a letter from a lady in Kingstown, signed "Evangeline," enclosing a £10 half-note (Bank of Ireland, 56,689), stating the other half would be sent to Mr. Gray. Could you find out if it has reached him, as I don't know who the lady is and cannot apply to her. I received yesterday morning a letter from Rangoon, from a soldier who read "Christmas on the Galtees," enclosing 2s. 6d., and to-day a notice from the Railway people, stating that a box of clothes remains to be called for. Every week, and sometimes every day, letters and parcels remind me of your visit and of the achievements of what Father Walsh calls your "awful pen." I have been asked a thousand times: "How is he?" and the Galtee people tell me they know your writing from all others in the *Freeman*.

Surely a tribute more agreeable to an author's vanity than a chorus of praise from the half-crown Reviews!

The story of the Galtee estate, I am glad to say, had the happy end that is but seldom to be found in connection with an Irish drama. Fourteen years afterwards, as I was leaving Euston, by the Irish night mail, the late Mr. Summers, M.P., one of the Liberal Whips, came up and told me the new Home Rule Lord-Lieutenant—Lord Houghton—was going over by the same train, and proposed to introduce me. It is one of the queer anomalies of Irish public life that, although the Lord-Lieutenant was in power by our votes, and going over to do our work, I was obliged to reply: "I wish him all sorts of good luck; but, both for his sake

and for mine, the wider berth we give one another the better." Mr. Summers had, however, news which interested me nearer. He told me he was himself crossing on a visit to Galtee Castle, of all places in the world; and he told me that the heirs of Mr. Nathaniel Buckley had grown fully alive to the wrongs and mutual misunderstandings of the old conflict, and that they were about to turn the tenantry of the Galtees into peasant proprietors upon the most generous terms. As a matter of fact, when I heard of "the Galtee people" last, they were the owners of their own homes for ever, they were delving, subsoiling, and reclaiming with joyous hearts, the extra-police hut was gone, and the bailiff as extinct as the wolf, and the Buckley family lived in Galtee Castle, happy and diffusing happiness among their neighbours, in no more danger of the flash of a blunderbuss than of the neighbouring peak of Galteemore bursting out into a volcanic eruption.

There is one other public event of 1878 which will remain stamped ineffaceably on my memory. It is my first hour of intimate relationship with Parnell. I had already seen him at public meetings, and by the light of Ronayne's hint, had easily enough come to discern signs of firmness and greatness under the modest exterior of a Methodist minister on his first circuit. I was now to pass, for the first time, beyond the outer envelope of the man. It will, perhaps, be found most interesting

to give my earliest impressions as they were freshly gathered, in a couple of entries in my journal, which I had commenced again to keep in this year of 1878, after nearly four years' intermission :—

*Nov. 15th.* Routed out at seven this morning to go to Tralee with Parnell and his fiery cross. Joined him in the same carriage from Mallow, and had three hours' astonishingly confidential chat. Coldish reception in Tralee, but no colder than public feeling everywhere about everything just now. Met many old revolutionary and semi-revolutionary friends—Harrington, Mick Power, John Kelly, etc. etc.—and had a cheery all-night sitting at Benners' until four. P. mostly silent, but all alive.

*Nov. 16th.* Parnell addressed a rough-and-tumble meeting, half farmers, half Fenians, with several tipsy interrupters and a preliminary alarm that the floor was giving way. He spoke under cruel difficulties, but fired them all before he sat down. The country is with him, in a half-hearted way, so far as it has any heart in anything.

*Nov. 17th.* Returned by night-mail, and had endless delightful glimpses of P. and of the real man. First, alone in the train from Tralee, then for three hours in Mallow, and then all night long as we travelled up. He has captured me, heart and soul, and is bound to go on capturing. A sweet seriousness *au fond*, any amount of nervous courage, a delicate reserve, without the smallest suspicion of hauteur; strangest of all, humour; above everything else, simplicity; as quietly at home with the girls in Mallow as with his turbulent audience in Tralee. We exchanged no end of confidences. As romantic as Lord Edward, but not to be shaken from prosier methods. In any case a man one could suffer with proudly.

Unluckily, I did not commit our conversation to writing in detail; but this first self-revelation of a



man who passes for one of the most enigmatic of mankind, yielded me an extraordinarily rich harvest of impressions which, in the course of more than twenty years' intimate experience, I never found reason to change. A few of his opinions and observations are unforgettable. He was immensely interested in my experiences of the difficulties of importing arms or preparing for an insurrection. It was quite clear that his only objection to insurrection was its impracticability. "In '98," he said, "the Wexfordman's pike, in the hands of a strong man, was a better weapon than the redcoat's gun. He could only fire it two or three times in a battle, and he always fired it in a flurry. Nothing could stop a bold pikesman. They might have cleared out the English in '98, even without the French, if all the counties had done as well as Wexford. But that is the trouble of a long-drawn conspiracy in Ireland. The best men got all shut up, and, when the time came, the only solid fight made was made by Wexford, where there was no conspiracy at all."

But since then the situation was wholly changed, as against armed rebellion, by the improvements in firearms (always with him a subject of intense scientific interest), and by the revolution in the proportional population of the two countries. "Ireland," he said, "is too small a country for a rebellion. There is not room enough to run away." There is, perhaps, a spice of his own pungent humour in

the remark ; but he argued it out as one of the deep truths of Irish public policy. "Washington," he said, "saved America by running away. If he had been fighting in Ireland, he would have been brought to a surrender in six weeks. Nowadays, with the railways, England could sweep the country from Cork to Donegal in six days." He was always specially proud of the fight Michael Dwyer and his band of outlaws made in the Wicklow Mountains, after the Wexford Insurrection was crushed. He knew all Dwyer's haunts in the hills, and more than hinted that his own great ancestor, Sir John Parnell, who lived in the midst of the insurgent country, was denounced to Dublin Castle as one in secret correspondence with the rebels. Curiously enough, the shooting-lodge at Aughavanagh, in which Parnell yearly spent the grouse season, was a military barrack erected for the extirpation of the rebel chief from the Wicklow Mountains.

Dearly as Parnell loved to coquet with the romance of Irish rebellion, his positive spirit stuck, with characteristic tenacity, to the duller but more effective system of warfare he was himself bringing into practice. The only remark of his which grated upon me was his young man's impatience with Isaac Butt. "Mr. Butt," he said, with one of his softly satirical smiles, "is a Professor." No doubt he laid his finger on the weak spot in Butt's Parliamentary strategy. He spoke with the elevation of thought and the veneration for Parliamentary

institutions of the old Trinity College lecturer on Constitutional Law. The House of Commons listened comfortably, and went to sleep. Mr. Biggar, espying strangers and turning the Prince of Wales out of the Gallery, did more to convince the inert Parliamentary intelligence that there was a bitter Irish question than all Butt's genius. "The first thing you've got to do with an Englishman on the Irish question is to shock him," Parnell said. "Then you can reason with him right enough."

I remarked on the apathy of the country, as evinced by his somewhat discouraging experiences in Tralee. "We have not nearly so good an audience in the House of Commons," he said, with a smile. He was in no wise dismayed for the future. He was, even then, keenly alive to the growth of foreign competition and its inevitable effect in pulling down the high prices which had hitherto averted a collapse of the Irish land system. "If we can bring the extreme men and the farmers to understand one another, we can do anything in that House of Commons." One other characteristic remark, as a revelation of his attitude of mind towards his own landowning class, particularly struck me. We were taking tea with some lady friends of mine in Mallow, and Parnell discovered a great interest in the Duhallow hunt, whose headquarters were in Mallow, and a minute knowledge of the district as a hunting country. "Yes," said



he, "the Duhallows are a fine pack. The only good things the Irish landlords have to show for themselves are their hounds and, perhaps"—he added—"in the Roscommon country, their horses."

## CHAPTER X

### DEATH AND A RESURRECTION

1878-1880

WHEN I returned from Tralee at five o'clock in the morning, I found that my mother and two brothers had sat up all night by the bedside of my sister, whom the doctor pronounced to be dying. The watchers were themselves scarcely less spectral. My brothers were both of them racked by a cough that had something of the sound of a death-bell. On December 5th there is a note :

Poor Jim had to come home from business, I fear never to return. He is a mere shell. As a last chance, I will send him to the South of France. Sat over the fire half the night brooding over the fate before us.

It was too late for the journey to France, or for any journey except to the grave. He had held out while a remnant of his magnificent strength lasted, and once he sank on his bed he never quitted it. My poor Dick also did the watching by his sister's side until two or three days before his own death. To make matters worse, the winter was one of the fiercest on record—a regular orgy of snowstorms and murder-

ous east winds—and my own cough began to be added to the dismal chorus that resounded from every room in the house, for in every room there was an invalid.

A few entries will help to explain why the events of that December filled my memory for many years to come with horror :—

*Dec. 7th.* Saw Sir Dominic,<sup>1</sup> who shook his head, but told me to be brave was my best physic. Warned me to keep within doors. His own courage, writhing under the gout, did really shame me, but more than all the courage in our poor home, where there is never a word of complaint, with all the coughs and suffering. M. worse and worse—only kept alive for last few days by small doses of milk and champagne.

*Dec. 11th.* M. and J. sinking every hour. Snow and cold frightful. Poor Dick also is yielding at last. Father Ryan with my brothers ; so sweet and good. The wound in my own lung makes the world seem so strange.

*Dec. 13th.* Wound in lung will not be shaken off. Still imprisoned within, listening day and night to the coughs, and in some curious way relieved by joining in. My poor mother does all the work of our hospital household, as ill herself as any. M'Weeney presses me to take refuge at his place. It is not altogether through courage I refuse.

And then the two brief records :

*Dec. 14th.* My brave Jim died at 4.30.

*Dec. 15th.* My poor, poor Dick went to heaven during the night. A night that will for ever haunt me.

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<sup>1</sup> The distinguished Dublin physician, Sir Dominic Corrigan, Bart., whose kindness to me in these trying times passes description. Whenever I proffered him a bank-note he would thrust it back into my pocket with, "Keep it till you are rich, and I am in a hospital for incurables."



My elder brother passed away peacefully in the afternoon, murmuring something about the Mallow Bridge and the rifles. The friends who came to sit up with us through the night, having satisfied themselves that there was no immediate danger of any other calamity, saw that the truest kindness would be to permit my mother to have some sleep, and left us alone towards one o'clock in the morning. Our servant, I grieve to say, perhaps as a consequence of over-watching, had become the worse of liquor, and had been quietly removed from the house by a friend. I stretched myself on the sofa in the sitting-room, the only room in the house where there was not somebody dying or dead, and tried to sleep. One familiar cough was now missing from the chorus. The others still from time to time broke through the silence of the house of death, but not in any specially alarming way, and my mother had mercifully fallen into a deep sleep after her long watchings. About two hours afterwards, I was awakened from a half-sleep by a particularly violent explosion of coughing from the room where my younger brother was lying. The coughing culminated in an awful hollow sigh, which sounds as distinctly in my memory now, more than a quarter of a century after, as it did on that dreadful night. Then there came a silence, more terrifying a thousand times than the coughing. I would have given anything to hear the well-known cough again.

There was no doubting what had happened. I

was afraid even to light the candle, for fear of arousing my mother, and perhaps precipitating another tragedy. I crept in the dark to my younger brother's room and listened intently for his breathing. Then I groped my way towards his bed, and placed my hand on his face. It was already cold. It was too late to give my mother any consolation by awakening her, and there was always the fear of the effect on my poor sister, whose cough alone now broke the stillness, save for an occasional attack of my own. I sat on the bed in the dark, with the dead, until the daylight, which it seemed never would come, and then, as I heard my mother move, went in to warn her not to frighten my sister. From that hour the overwhelming sadness of human life has never quitted me. If my hair had not grown white when I looked in the glass, it was certainly another man, and a sad one, I saw there.

*Dec. 21st.* Back again at business. House so lonely. How I long to hear again the coughs that are silenced! Maggie only awaiting God's time, so sweetly. Poor Jim! A stouter-hearted foe of England never breathed, nor yet a kinder heart. If ever I write an affecting story it will be the story of his broken life. But I feel my poor Dick's loss most of all. He clung to me like ivy, and I do believe the strongest image on his guileless heart was mine. Though he was twenty-two, he looked in his coffin like a child of fourteen who had fallen asleep. May a good God be kind to them!

My sister struggled along for more than a fort-

night more. She would insist on my raising the blind to let her see the two hearses and the two coffins which were the last she saw on earth of those who were gone before her.

*Dec. 25th.* Christmas Day. M. at death's doors. Father Ryan thinks she will hardly live through the night; mother is worn to a shadow; myself in an unhealthy perspiration, following the same frightful round of symptoms. Had my Christmas dinner off a fowl sent in cooked by Mrs. Danne. Nobody here to cook—soon, perhaps, nobody to cook for. Another outburst from poor Maggie's room. Dread each cough of hers may be the last.

It was not until the night of the 5th of January that her long martyrdom ended in a peace that already whispered of heaven. As though I had not supped full of horrors, the morning after my sister's death, the distracted old mother of a brother pressman called to tell me her son had died in a small-pox hospital, and that she had no other friend left in the world to arrange for his funeral. On the morning on which my sister was buried I had to repair, with another faithful friend, to the Hardwicke Small-pox Hospital to bury my old Press comrade, his poor mother forming, with the two of us, the entire funeral procession, for the panic caused by the small-pox epidemic was general; and the old lady, standing alone in her weeds by the small-pox shed, silently rebuked me with the reminder that there was somebody in the world even more desolate than myself.



If the details of a private grief are related with so much particularity, it is because this tragic episode coloured my whole life and character, and explains the recklessness (for it was not calm courage) with which I was afterwards accustomed to encounter personal danger, and which, perhaps, alone made me in any degree a formidable element in a semi-revolutionary movement. From that time forth my feeling was that of one five out of six parts of whose being were already in another world, and as to whom it mattered excessively little to any one how soon the remaining fraction might follow. But time was to prove that it is as true of Death as Plato held it to be of Fame, that it flies the pursuer, and pursues the flier. As usual, I turned to my pen for consolation, and before the end of January had drafted the opening chapters of a contemporary Irish novel, entitled *The Lord Harry*.<sup>1</sup> My friend Hooper, to whom I submitted them, gave a discouraging judgment, whose worldly sagacity was even then sufficiently obvious.

“‘For God’s sake,’” my note runs, “‘whatever you write, don’t touch politics, and don’t offend the priests.’ ‘But, my dear fellow,’ I said, ‘in Ireland not to touch politics is not to touch life; and as to the priests, it is just because I love them and would double their

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<sup>1</sup> A first *ébauche* of that which was published ten years afterwards as *When we were Boys*, the other title having been appropriated in the meantime by an English dramatist.

influence for good, that I am not afraid to tell them how they cut the young Irish soul in two when they set up any antagonism between Religion and Nationality.'

"‘Don't be a Don Quixote,' was his reply. 'Never try to alter anything in Ireland, or you will suffer for it.' He is right. The only safe Irish policy is—Kismet! I feel like a man entering a vault strewn with the bones of a thousand failures. But *que voulez-vous*? Be it infatuation or no, I feel I have before my mind's eye something that would be new and would conciliate sympathy for Ireland, even in the ranks of Tuscany, had I only six months of peace and health to try to realise it. It is the only legacy I have to leave."

The few opening chapters, however, went no further. They were lost, and the idea never returned until it took shape in Galway Jail ten years subsequently. The truth is, during this awful winter I crept through the streets of Dublin more dead than alive, with the feeling that the east wind was prowling around the corners with a weapon as sharp as a murderer's knife, and I grew less and less inclined to make any resistance. Sir Dominic Corrigan alone stimulated me to show fight. "If you stay here six weeks longer," he said, "my business with you will be over; but if you make the sea-trip to Egypt I mark out for you, you will come back a new man." I suppose I must have suggested some despondent doubt whether it would be worth the trouble and the expense. "Are you afraid you are going to die?" he asked, his eyes piercing me through as searchingly as the X-rays

of a later day. "Well, no, sir, I don't think I am very much afraid."—"Very well, then you won't!" he growled; and, such miracle-workers may a glance or a word from genius be, I went away to Egypt with the perfect confidence that there was one stronger than Death who had passed his word that I was to go scatheless.

The ravishing Mediterranean cruise and the desert air of Egypt, vivifying as dry champagne, did indeed come upon me with something of the delights of an opening Paradise for one slain by the east winds of Dublin; and I have never since ceased to regard Egypt as my second country, a second Oriental mother, in whose mysterious eyes, however, there was missing the magic something of the two plaintive Irish eyes far away in the western mists. It was my fortune to make this Eastern journey, as it was to make my first visit to all the great cities of the old world—to Dublin, to London, to Cairo, to Naples, to Rome, and to Paris—all alone, more companionless even than Childe Harold, who at least roamed these self-same deep blue seas with his page and his stout yeoman at call. The loneliness only enabled me to take in deeper draughts of the romance with which the bare names of the places I glided by in a delicious dream intoxicated me—the golden land of Spain, Gibraltar, the old nest of the Algerines, the Cathedral-graves of the Maltese Knights, Alexandria, with its soft whispers of Cleopatra, the bazaars of Cairo, still



alive with the wildest colours of the *Arabian Nights*, the Sphinx and the Pyramids, and their innumerable centuries, the everlasting grey desert around Helouan, Naples, Elba, Marseilles, and—to wind up with—my first dazzled glimpse of Paris, still scarred with the wounds of the Terrible Year, but, to my unaccustomed gaze, such a scene of magnificence, of enchantment, of elegance, of sparkle of mind and lights and mirrors, as seemed the apotheosis of the glittering nineteenth century, and yet sent me back dreaming regretfully of the shadowy ruins and mysterious silences of the East.

On May 12th, on board the *Messagerie* boat at Naples, I bought an English paper which contained the announcement that a new writ had been moved for Limerick City “in the room of Isaac Butt, deceased.” He died of a broken heart, the endemic malady of Irish leaders before and after him. Fate closed in on him, act after act, with the dread certainty of a play of Euripides. Whatever loose bond of discipline held his group of Whig place-beggars and Tory landlords together, under his own mild constitutional rule, was wholly broken when Parnell arose with a programme which invited Home Rule squires, like Colonel King-Harman, to abolish Landlordism, and Home Rule lawyers to make war against all English parties and governments in a deadly earnest which would put an end to all hope of a quiet life or a respectable preferment. There was no organised popular force at Butt’s

back. The attempts to relieve his embarrassments by a national tribute yielded somewhat pitiful results. The finances of his Home Rule League were at so low an ebb that I remember its Secretary, who was attending a Waterford meeting, was obliged to go about collecting the outstanding subscriptions of local members, in order to defray the expenses of his return to Dublin. So little had selfish interest to do with Butt's financial straits, I believe there is no doubt that he might have had the Irish Chief Justiceship at the moment when he was being pursued by bailiffs for paltry judgment debts.

Of two mournful stages of his downfall I was a personal witness as a pressman. The first was when, at a Convention in Liverpool, the Home Rule League of Great Britain (of which he was the founder) deposed him from the presidency and put Parnell in his place. "I remember so well the cheery face of the splendid old gentleman as he afterwards sat at dinner at the Adelphi Hotel with the men who had defeated him, and chatted gaily with them. I remember also the pathetic close of that dinner when the lost leader departed alone to catch the train for London, while the new men were preparing for a great evening demonstration in some large public hall, in celebration of their triumph." One other scene—the last in which I saw him—lingers sadly in my memory. It was the final tussle in the Home Rule League, in the Molesworth Street Hall in Dublin, when Butt was for the

first time virtually beaten, after a six hours' debate, by Messrs. Parnell, Biggar, and Dillon. Who that heard him can ever forget the bowed and broken old man's heart-breaking appeal to give him back again the days when he had a united country behind him? Ireland is woefully rich in such tragedies. The process by which Mr. Parnell, in his last tragic days, went through a similar ordeal, in his turn, was not more pitiful in substance, though it was coarser in the manner of execution. Those who deposed Mr. Butt were absolutely and inevitably in the right, but the pity of it!—the stooped shoulders, the genial old face, the vast, arched forehead, with the rings of silver hair tossing about it, the voice in which you heard the last rattle of dying genius!

This was on February 3rd, 1879, and on February 24th my journal contains this entry: "Poor Butt is dying. In Ireland a man has to die to be a hero; yet it is neither Ireland's fault nor his if the tragedy ends as a tragedy should." And on March 13th: "Poor Butt has been unmercifully spared. Had he died now, there had been a royal burial and a National provision for his family. Who will answer, even for this much, a year hence?" The gloomy anticipation was indeed justified. He was buried quietly in the graveyard of his native village of Stranorlar, in distant Donegal, and by the time I got home to Ireland the country was in the first throes of a Revolution, amidst which Butt's statesmanlike counsels of perfection and dark struggles



with Destiny were soon forgotten. But the Irish understanding is as sure in the long run to arrive at the right conclusion as the Irish heart. The days for the full recognition of Butt's genius will come, if they have not come already.

The fault of his failure, as above remarked, was neither his country's nor his own. Not his own ; for he laid the foundations on which all the men who followed him have built. It was he who discovered the power of an organised Irish electorate in Great Britain. He laid down the broad lines of a National University, which no man since has improved upon. He first projected a separate and independent Irish Parliamentary Party, although he failed to command the right material, or to draw the bonds of discipline sufficiently tight. Finally, he first preconised that triple union of a conciliated Protestant minority, of Fenian self-sacrifice, and of an enfranchised peasantry, upon which any really statesmanlike fabric of Irish Nationality must rest ; only the masses of the extreme men were still cold, and the Land question made antagonism between the landed men and the people a necessity of life on both sides. The time was not yet come when the Land Conference of 1903 could base themselves on a state of things in which the moneyed interest, as well as the political power and amenities of life, of the Irish gentry could be made to depend upon their identification with the Nationalist masses and their Cause.

Neither is the country to be taxed with in-

gratitude, on the other hand, for exchanging a leader who was only great in design for a leader whose genius lay in action. It ought to be one of the gravest self-reproaches of thoughtful Englishmen that Butt's capital mistake was in trusting to the force of reasoning and eloquent appeal upon the English Parliament. He addressed them with the tongue of "a damaged Archangel" on behalf of a peaceful country, and at the head of a most civil-spoken Party, and he accomplished absolutely nothing. Parnell and Biggar came along with their dull, indomitable genius for being disagreeable, and with a revolution swelling in behind them, and both English parties promptly recognised there was an Irish question and did them homage. The phrase "The Policy of Exasperation," which, to Butt's fine constitutional mind, seemed the heaviest reproach he could level against Parnell's methods, was the description of all others which recommended it to the Irish race, for it was the only policy which could induce English statesmen to listen. It was English unwisdom which killed Butt, and killed the Policy of Moderation with him, and gave to the Policy of Exasperation a complete vindication and a long career of resounding triumph.

Calling into the House of Commons the evening of my return to London, on May 22nd, I was told by Mr. O'Connor Power that he had just been attending a meeting of his constituents at the village of Irishtown, in the county of Mayo, which would

make history. The whole country-side had flocked together, as at a word of command, including horse-men enough to form a regiment of cavalry, and Mr. Power, who had sounded all the subterranean depths of Irish disaffection, spoke very solemnly of what was coming. It was the first whisper I heard of the Land League movement, although even the name was not yet invented. There was nothing new in the objects. Peasant proprietary, in substitution for Landlordism, was already firmly embedded in the popular programme, and during the preceding year many meetings in different parts of the country with this object had been addressed by Mr. Parnell and his lieutenants, under the influence of the alarm caused by two disastrous years for agriculture, and the rising spirit evoked by the obstructives' triumphant defiance of Parliamentary law and order. The real change wrought by the Land League was that it supplied to Parnell the tremendous dynamic force for which Butt had appealed in vain at Hood's Hotel ten years before, in days when public spirit was completely broken. Nearly all the most potent men in the old revolutionary movement were won over not merely to tolerate, but sincerely to co-operate in the attempt to try what a courageous passive resistance could do where arms had failed, and the most simple-minded patriotic spirit was thus allied with the most powerful of all material motives—a struggle for the land of Ireland—in an agricultural crisis which conjured



up the terrors of eviction in half the homes of the country, and forced more than half a million of the people to fight for their very lives against mere hunger. The force of Obstruction in the House of Commons was in this way supplemented by vaster and more insuppressible elements of resistance in Ireland.

For this accession to the national strength two remarkable men—Mr. Michael Davitt and Mr. John Devoy—are mainly to be thanked. The fact that he was himself the son of a County Mayo tenant cruelly evicted, his long years of suffering in penal servitude for Ireland, his picturesque and soldierly one-armed figure, were in themselves sufficient to give Mr. Davitt a secure place in the popular heart. His theories of Land Reform, if lacking in precision, were broad-minded and generous, inasmuch as they seemed to promise advantages to the whole community and not merely to those in actual occupation of land. It is one other of the reproaches that ought to weigh upon the English conscience, that Mr. Davitt's dreary term of prison torments was spent not in elaborating schemes of vengeance against England, but in indulging dreams of a cordial union with the English democracy, even in days before the English democracy had given any tangible proof of a reciprocal spirit towards Irish Nationalists; and that, nevertheless, the English statesmanship, which ought to have hailed such a spirit with a corresponding generosity, only suc-

ceeded in driving Mr. Davitt many years after to throw up his seat in the English Parliament, in despair of obtaining justice by pacific methods.

The part played by his co-founder of the Land League movement, Mr. Devoy, is less known, because the terms on which he was amnestied forbade him to return to Ireland,<sup>1</sup> and consequently exposed him to misunderstandings of the situation at home, which eventually made him a bitter enemy of the semi-parliamentary, semi-agrarian revolution he had so influential a part in launching. His hostility in later days, however, ought not to make us forgetful of the sagacity and courage with which he first rallied even the extremest of the extreme men to give a full and fair trial to Parnell and his methods. Mr. Devoy was a born conspirator, and, like all born conspirators, can never be measured at his true value by the public. But it is certain that, in his own special department of swearing into the Revolutionary Brotherhood the soldiers of the Dublin Garrison, in 1865, he was perhaps the most dangerous enemy of England in the entire Fenian body, and, in some respects, not altogether unworthy to rank not very far beneath Wolfe Tone. It is equally sure that his public letters, in 1878-79, foreshadowing the Land League Revolution, and basing it upon the principle suggested by his famous

<sup>1</sup> It is, nevertheless, certain that Mr. Devoy secretly visited the West of Ireland on the eve of the formation of the Land League, and doubtless set the occult machinery going which was soon to make its work visible in the Land League meetings.

metaphor of "employing the Land question as the engine to drag Home Rule," reveal a keen political insight, and had a profound effect even on the fiercest of the fanatics with whom "Parliamentary agitation" spelt Ichabod. His metaphor did not mean, as the *Times* used once absurdly to argue, that the Irish farmers, that is to say, the bulk of the Irish population, had no interest in Home Rule for its own sake. It only meant that the Land question, being a daily and hourly question of mere existence, was the more urgent question of the two, even as breath in his lungs is of more importance to a dying man than his status in society. If, in fighting the landlords, the Irish people were also fighting the English garrison and the English Government with the most effectual weapons at their disposal, that was only to combat English rule through its own worst product, and to combat it without the bloody reprisals by which the landlords of France were made to expiate a less barbarous oppression.

These pages have no pretension to be a history of our times. They aim at nothing beyond recording incidents of which I have some personal cognisance, so far, indeed, as they are written at all with any greater reference to the opinion of the outer public than were the *Poetical Works* and the manuscript newspaper of my boyish hours. It is not possible, therefore, to enter here into the differences of standpoint from which Mr. Davitt and Mr. Devoy viewed the agrarian movement, or the



differences which separated them both from Mr. Parnell. It is possible that Mr. Devoy never relinquished his dream of an ultimate Irish Republic, as it is quite certain that Parnell no more demanded that he should make any such abjuration than he would have been willing himself to surrender his own clear judgment as to the future at the demand of Mr. Devoy. Where Mr. Davitt and Mr. Devoy were in perfect accord was that it was the first and most patriotic duty of the men who had before risked their lives on the battlefield or in penal cells to throw themselves with equal fervour into Parnell's war for the achievement of National Self-Government, and the Abolition of Landlordism by the means which the British Constitution left in his hands. It had happened often enough that Irishmen, who began as Reformers, were goaded into Rebellion. It was the first time that Irishmen, who began as Rebels, were transformed into Reformers. Could the force of ineptitude further go than that such a transformation, which might have yielded immeasurable advantages to England, and was, perhaps, the most striking evidence of Parnell's genius for canalising the wayward forces of Irish disaffection, should be for many years cast up to him in England as a reproach, if not a crime?

We were still, however, far from the times when it was worth while debating whether a Policy of Conciliation could be honestly accepted by Ireland.

Conciliation had first to be offered by England, and as yet no English statesman had even contemplated the possibility of concession on either of the two vital points of a National Parliament or the expropriation of the landlords. Both Parliament men and landlords had first to be shaken with something of the rudeness of an earthquake shock out of their comfortable persuasion that there was no longer an Irish difficulty worth wasting a thought upon. We were even many months before the Land League movement itself obtained the slightest hold on the country.

On my return from Egypt, I found that the Irish-town meeting, and the two or three other Mayo meetings which followed it, had attracted little or no attention, and had been, indeed, only reported in the meagrest form by the *Freeman*. The Irish Party, after Butt's death, had fallen into the most dilapidated condition. Parnell and his lieutenants alone evoked any spark of enthusiasm in Ireland, by the cold pertinacity with which they picked to pieces the most venerable traditions of English constitutional life, and the contempt with which they treated the outcries of the writhing friends of Parliamentary institutions. But they were still a small group, without money, and even without any popular organisation at their back. The mass of the Irish members were more or less virulently against them; so was the remnant of Butt's Home Rule League; so was the principal Nationalist

newspaper in the country, whenever a favourable opportunity offered for planting a cautious dart in some weak point.

In the July of 1879 the two sections of the Irish Party came to issue at the Ennis election, where Mr. William O'Brien, Q.C., the moderate Home Ruler and future placeman, was supported by Mr. Gray and the *Freeman*, and by a majority of the Home Rule League Council, and opposed with characteristic resoluteness by Mr. Parnell. He suddenly arrived in the borough with his candidate, James Lysaght Finegan, an unknown journalist, with no recommendation whatever except that of a gallant soldier and an Irish Nationalist, ready to follow the flag into any post of danger. Parnell carried his man to the head of the poll, to the astoundment of all the influential, financial, Parliamentary, clerical, and journalistic supporters of the future judge.

The quarrel between Parnell and Gray, which was accentuated by the Ennis election, was still further embittered by a public declaration of Gray that, in the division lobby of the House of Commons, Parnell had stigmatised his colleagues, who deserted him on the Irish University question, as "Papist Rats." The result was an acrid newspaper controversy, some of the Irish members attesting that they had heard him use the offensive phrase, and others repelling the accusation as an attempt to arouse religious prejudice against



a Protestant Patriot. The truth seems to have been that the word "rats" was assuredly used, but that Gray was mistaken in thinking he had heard the epithet "Papist." Parnell was not a man of adjectives, and had not a tinge of the coarse bigotry in which such insults find their inspiration. His observation, whatever it was, was indeed intended to be heard by his own intimate comrades in obstruction, who were "Papists" themselves, and who would have resented any offence to Catholicism as fiercely as the individuals he was denouncing. The personal conflict was terminated by the good offices of the Archbishop of Cashel, who loved the two great Irishmen equally well, and privately effected a reconciliation, which was never afterwards in any danger of being undone. But the affair had excited popular suspicion of Gray and the *Freeman* to an alarming pitch. He determined to wipe out the memory of the "Papist Rats" controversy by one of those striking newspaper *coups* for which he had a Napoleonic genius. Hints had reached him that famine and revolution were impending in the west; but Mr. "Jimmy" Lowther,<sup>1</sup> the Chief Secretary, scoffed at every suggestion of any general distress, and the reports of the three obscure meetings at Irishtown, Westport, and Milltown had given the

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lowther declared in Parliament on May 27th, 1879, "He was glad to think that the depression in Irish agriculture, although undoubted, was neither so prevalent nor so acute as the depression existing in other parts of the United Kingdom."

country in general no indication that a movement of any magnitude was gathering behind them. The first considerable task laid upon me when I returned home was to undertake a special commission to the west to ascertain the truth. Gray made no disguise how much depended for himself and his paper, as well as for the country, upon my mission. He left me free to proclaim the truth at any risk to himself or the paper.

A few extracts from my journal may give the best glimpse of my discoveries :—

*Aug. 21st.* Came away to Castlebar with an abject terror of my task, and of E. D. G.'s very exaggerated notions of my power to fight down the rising storm of unpopularity. It is always when I expect most I can do least. If I were only equally sure of the converse!—  
*3 o'clock.* Missed James Daly, who is the storm-centre of the agitation. Made out parish priest, Canon M'Gee, who at first shivered at Daly's name and looked reserved, but when we sat down to talk, turned out most kind and cordial and modest and good. . . . Nothing but destruction threatening all round ; famine and eviction before the people ; neither landlords nor Government have an atom of compassion, or even suspect what is coming. Does not like the agitators, but, for himself, does not know what else he can do for the people except pray to God for them. . . . Daly made me out later at the hotel and hailed the Press as a deliverer. "It is the first time they ever discovered the unfortunate County Mayo on the map of Ireland. They were never done talking of the famine pits of Skibbereen, because there was a smart local doctor who wrote them up." Two hundred thousand people died of hunger in Mayo, after living on nettles and asses' flesh, and the world never said as much as "God

be merciful to them!" A rough-spoken giant, with an inexhaustible fund of knowledge of the people and the quaintest mother-wit. Talked far into the night and told me stories of Mayo landlordism that followed me to bed like nightmares.

*Aug. 22nd.* Drove to Louisburgh and back, 54 miles on an open car, under tempest of rain for greater part of road. For ten miles to Westport, a solitude of rich green land: whole population exterminated by Lord Lucan, their land let to Scotch graziers, and the boundary walls built of the ruins of their cabins. In Westport, shopkeepers' books, debts to make one think of universal bankruptcy as the only cure. Grand drive by borders of Clew Bay under Croagh Patrick.<sup>1</sup> Found mob of wretches around Rent Office, crushed with debt and despair, and petitioning for an abatement of rent. Lord Sligo's agent as much amazed at their boldness as if the mountain sheep had taken up arms to invade him. Told them haughtily there could be no abatement. There was a voice: "Well, then, we'll keep a firm grip of our homesteads." It was Parnell's phrase at the Westport meeting a few weeks ago. The poor creatures trembled at the audacity of the Voice, and cast down their eyes to show it was not they. Dinner at home of Bishop Mac-Evilly's mother, who saw the French in '98. She was flying from Killala in her father's car, when the "little men with the guns" jumped over the ditch and stopped them. Back after midnight, drenched with rain, but with no thought for anything except the extraordinary and horrible things I am hearing every hour.

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<sup>1</sup> It was the first time I passed, all unconsciously, the house that was afterwards to become my home. The knowledge I then acquired of the people's pathetic helplessness, and their natural gentleness of character under all sorts of sordid and demoniacal cruelties on the part of their masters, came upon me with the force of a revelation, and has afforded me one of the deepest gratifications of my life, by helping to make me instrumental, in no matter how slight a degree, in brightening their lot.



*Aug. 23rd.* Rummaging Poor Law books and shopkeepers' accounts with Canon M'Gee. News of arrival has spread like wildfire. Messengers from all directions begging me hither and thither. Head swimming with tales of misery. When I sat down to write towards midnight, was sorely tempted to break the pen and give up: the despair is catching.

*Aug. 24th.* To Belcarra, Clogherlynch, Ballintubber, etc., in torrents of rain. Air sick with the rotten smell of the potato-blight. Day after day nothing but lightning and rain to spread the havoc. Met some very desperate people under sentence of eviction, at Clogherlynch, with a fixed look that frightened one. They say they have but one life to lose, and better death by gunshot than by slow starvation. They mean it.

*Aug. 26th.* At Ballyhaunis; cattle down £1 per beast at the fair. Drove of poor people haunting me, to listen to whom is misery. Famine, nothing less, is writ large over the country; but the Chief Secretary has his joke, and the landlords won't abate a farthing, and shout down the cry of distress as all lying and acting. . . . To my terror, my letters are greedily caught up. This poor newspaper scribbler has actually become an important personage for the poor people. What a comment on their friendlessness and on their masters!

Experiences like the above, repeated from week to week all over the provinces of Connaught and Munster during the six succeeding months, and proceeding not from vague generalisations, but from minute inquiries into the actual life-story of living men and women, from cabin to cabin, and from district to district, admitted me to a knowledge of the Irish Land question which could not well go deeper. They have left upon all my after

life an indelible impression, amounting almost to an obsession, as to the wickedness of the Irish Landlord System as a means of discouraging all thought of energy or improvement in the country and inflicting unimaginable cruelties on the poor and weak. From that time forth the extirpation of that system seemed an object worthy of any sacrifice, and containing in itself its own rich reward.

What, perhaps, was the most hateful discovery of all was that the poorer the land and the meeker the tenant, the more merciless was his rent, and the more diabolical the oppression practised upon him. In the richer parts of the country, the system bred special evils of its own ; but the Tipperary peasant living on a generous soil often paid little more than half the sum per acre that was extorted from the small holder of Mayo for the acre or two of similar quality which might be found, like an oasis, amidst the rocks and swamps which made up the rest of his holding. The grim Tipperary man was treated with deference in the Rent Office, even when in arrear ; and actual eviction was not ventured upon except in extreme cases. The little mountainy-man of Mayo was habitually treated by his superiors with less ceremony than he treated his own ass, and being all his life a gale or two in arrears incurred in some old famine-time, was every other year writted in the Courts, distrained, or evicted, in order to divide a rich harvest of law costs among the obscene tribe

of bailiffs, process-servers, agents, and lawyers who battered upon his misery.

A more cruel circumstance still, the poor western, evicted from the fertile lands which abound in Connaught, was more heavily rented per acre for the miserable mountain patch to which he was banished than the big grazier or gombeen-man, in whose interest he was driven from his own fields, was asked to pay for them. The poorer landlords held the poorest parts of the country, and the rents were fixed not according to the poverty of the land or of the tenant who reclaimed it, but according to the necessities of the landlord, who did nothing for the land except to rack-rent and mortgage it. In the annals of human slavery there is no more pitiful figure than that of the hunger-stricken and debt-crushed peasant of the western half of Ireland bowing meekly under the whips of whole categories of cruel slave-drivers, from the haughty agent and the estate attorney with bowels of iron down to the brute who generally officiated as rent-warner and the gombeen-man, who exacted cent per cent for his supply of Indian meal, with the view of ultimately grabbing his debtor's holding. Those who are most genuinely shocked at the barbarous forms of vengeance which sometimes, though rarely, marked the uprising of those slaves, when the terror of wholesale extermination and death by hunger at last stirred the instincts of human nature in their blood, ought not to forget that if (as is the



case) there was not a single case of agrarian murder in Tipperary throughout the Land League agitation, it was because the olden reputation of Tipperary for stern resistance to oppression had made the Tipperary landlord a more cautious, if not more humane, practitioner; and that, if rack-renting and legal cruelty had done their worst on Mayo in every form of heartlessness, it was very largely indeed because the poor fellaheen of the Nile or the niggers of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had never bent under the lash of their torturers with a gentler or more unresisting spirit than these primitive Gaelic folk, forgotten by the world in their mists and mountains.

Even while my inquiries were proceeding, there was yet no general organisation of the people. Clear-sighted landlords and a benignant Government might still have easily taken the lightnings out of the storm that was rising. The Mayo landlords' idea of wisdom was to meet the situation by a combination of the four strongest of them—Lord Sligo, Lord Lucan, Sir Roger Palmer, and Sir Robert Blosse Lynch—to refuse an abatement of 10 per cent on the current rents, three months before the Land League was founded. The statecraft of the Government was to pass the word to their police officials to discredit my reports and laugh to scorn any fear of general distress, a few weeks before the Lord-Lieutenant and his wife were forced to appeal wildly to the world for subscriptions to avert a general famine.

A few dates will give the key to the history of Ireland for the next quarter of a century. In August 1879 the Mayo landlords formed their solemn league and covenant to deny even an abatement of 10 per cent to the tenants whose crops were rotting wholesale before their eyes, and whose cattle were unsaleable. In the same month of August Mr. James Lowther dismissed the stories of distress as fiction; on 21st October the Irish National Land League was founded in the Imperial Hotel, Dublin, under the presidency of Parnell; on December 18th, the Duchess of Marlborough issued her appeal to the charity of the world to come to the relief of the imaginary distress; on February 6th, 1880, Mr. Lowther loaned £1,100,000 out of the Church Surplus Fund to the landlords (the last of his sardonic jokes as Chief Secretary), by way of starting relief works. The landlords kept their 10 per cent and brought a Revolution hurtling about their ears.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1880

ONE or two more extracts from my diary may be permissible here. The time is approaching when it will be no longer safe to commit one's thoughts to paper, and when there will come a gap of many years in my journalising.

*Nov. 19th.* A *coup d'état* or an Ashanti bomb<sup>1</sup>—which? At six this morning, Daly, Davitt, and Killeen were taken out of their beds and carried off to Sligo Jail. Packed off by night mail train to interview them.

*Nov. 20th.* Got into Sligo at 3.30 A.M., the only passenger, and beat for an hour at Imperial Hotel to wake a sleepy boots. Saw the prisoners, who are, as I anticipated, in exultant spirits. The jail-gate is the Triumphal Arch of Irish conquerors. They might have been speechifying for years without acquiring half the power the Castle people have given them. Something might be said for shooting troublesome Irishmen; absolutely nothing for prosecuting them. Not one in a million could have told who poor Killeen was yesterday. To-day the jail officials are more afraid of him than he is of bolts and bars.

*Nov. 22nd.* An historic day at Balla, where the first

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<sup>1</sup> A species of powder squib, then popular with small boys.



of the evictions was to have come off. As I stood shivering on the platform at Castlereagh, met Parnell, who, with a falcon's eye for his chance, had come down by special train during the night. Robinson, of *Daily Telegraph*, and a troop of minor English specials, have swarmed over as to a revolution. An eviction that might have come off before a few dozen villagers, had all England and Ireland watching—and did not come off at all. And it was the tocsin rung from the Castle did it all. At a preliminary council of war at M'Ellin's Hotel ———<sup>1</sup> objected to the resolutions as illegal and said they would all be prosecuted. "Don't you think, Mr. ———," said P., "our Law Adviser had better have remained at home to-day?" But it was a narrow shave. It was the first time I saw P. in a fury. A vast column of young men, four deep, marched up the hill at top of which the police were mustered around the tenant's house. All of a sudden the column divided into a huge crescent formation, Zulu fashion, spreading out at a rush to right and left, threatening to envelop the handful of police. Police rushed to their rifles and stood to arms in a perfect panic. P. ran to one of the horns of the crescent and charged them furiously to fall back, striking at their heads with his umbrella and tumbling over one big countryman who had a stick and looked nasty. It was a dangerous moment. But Parnell and Brennan carried their point and beat back the column. "Only for you, Mr. Parnell," the frightened police officer afterwards said, "there would have been murder." "Yes," said P., with his peculiar smile, "and suicide." The eviction was abandoned, and the victors left in possession of the battlefield. Great joy and four hours of wild speechmaking in Balla.

Parnell followed up his advantage. At the jail-gate he scoffed at the arrests, held a meeting to

<sup>1</sup> A lawyer whose care for his personal safety soon withdrew him from the movement.

denounce jury-packing outside the Assize Court, where Messrs. Davitt and Daly were tried, and caused the prosecution to evaporate in contempt and ridicule. By a system of resistance carried to the extreme verge of peril, but not an inch beyond, he paralysed the agrarian law in Ireland as successfully as he had driven a coach-and-four through the rules of the House of Commons by obstruction. He had the supreme gift, so rarely to be found in Ireland, of knowing when it was wisdom to be moderate and when it was wisdom to be extreme. Having laid his lines in the House of Commons and in Ireland, he now proceeded to annex the almost unexplored and illimitable field of Irish-American sympathy.

*Dec. 16th.* A long chat with P. He induced the Central Tenants' Association to snuff themselves out to-day in favour of the more radical Land League. He leaves for U.S. Sunday, with Dillon. Told me he had asked E. D. G. to send me with him, but fears E. D. G. still champs the bit. Several ugly attempts in *Freeman* to set the new League and the fixity-of-tenure people by the ears. Always an unsure friend. . . . In any case, mother's illness would make it impossible. A *Sœur de bon secours* with her night and day. Bronchitis turning to pneumonia; Dr. O'L.<sup>1</sup> tells me the shadow of an incurable disease behind. I groan at the contrast between my uselessness and the *Sœur's* angelic ways. Still, she loves to see me in the room; it is her only worldly comfort, short of death. . . . Told me his accounts from the country bore out the worst anticipations of my letters. "They have found it out at the Castle at last," he said.

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<sup>1</sup> The late eminent surgeon, Dr. O'Leary, M.P. for Drogheda.

"They are going to fight the Famine—or is it the League?—from behind the Duchess' <sup>1</sup> petticoats." "Worse might happen," I ventured to remark, "than if Jemmy himself would start out on a rival begging-tour to spite you." "Yes," said P., "it would be the best of his Irish jokes. We shall want a million of money."

As the winter advanced, the distress deepened steadily, from privation to actual starvation. When I visited the wild islands of Inishbofin and Inishark in December, I found men and women in the latter island lying on the floor of their cabins, too weak from hunger to rise, or even to frighten the rats which, it was remarked, were beginning to attack them in their beds, through some instinct of vultures scenting a prey. There was nothing to eat except slocaun cooked with Indian meal, and not much of that. A relief schooner, laden with meal, was lying in Westport, waiting for an abatement of the tempest that howls along this formidable coast for weeks together in the winter. When the schooner ventured forth, and won the race for life for the islanders, it was deemed a heroic feat. A row-boat, even the frail canvas-backed curragh, is a safer storm-bird in these seas; but no amount of money I (in my ignorance of the danger) could offer would induce the Boffin men to trust their cockle-

<sup>1</sup> Chief Secretary Lowther, having all the autumn scoffed at the fear of famine with stable-yard merriment, the Duchess of Marlborough, on December 18th, issued an urgent appeal to the world for charitable funds, and thenceforward devoted herself with a gracious assiduity to the alleviation of the calamity the permanent officials would have fain ignored. Her relief fund realised £135,000.



shell curragh over the foaming stretch of water to Inishark, until the priest volunteered to take his seat first in the curragh.

My first visit to Clare Island was made in a row-boat, manned by four stalwart Achill men—between whose hungry eyes and grand natural strength of bone and sinew there was a ghastly contrast. A crowd, and apparently not a friendly one, awaited us on the shore after our stormy passage. We afterwards learned that the Clare Islanders were at the moment “expecting the Sheriff.” In other words, a police expedition on board a gunboat was awaiting a lull in the storm to make a descent for rent upon the unhappy island, and it took some time to convince the people that our boat did not carry a scouting-party for the Sheriff.<sup>1</sup> The island, which was thus to be raided for rent by a gunboat, was so destitute of food that the best the good priest of the island had to offer me was a cup of tea and a home-made cake of Indian meal. For want of more substantial fare, it was unfortunately deemed best to give my boatmen a glass of whiskey apiece to fortify them for the return journey. The result was

<sup>1</sup> Life has given me few happier reflections than that Clare Island, which I thus saw for the first time under all the terrors of hunger and squalid landlord oppression, is now, owing to a train of circumstances of peculiar satisfaction to the writer, a happy community of peasant proprietors, free for ever from the shadow of famine, landlordism, gunboat, or sheriff. I had the happiness of seeing the steamer, in which the agent and sheriff used to invade the island for rent, rotting to pieces on the beach near Mallow Cottage, its occupation and that of the sheriff-agent being gone.

to afford me an interesting proof both of the weakness to which want of proper food had reduced the people and of the staying-power of tea as compared with whiskey. When we set off, the poor fellows, under the influence of the stimulant, lay to their oars with a gallant cheer, and for the first hour or two sent their boat quivering up and down the precipitous sides of the waves, which ran mountains high, with the most extraordinary swiftness and sureness. Their energies then fell away. They bore up manfully as long as the current in the North Channel had to be fought, but once in the smoother waters, within shelter of the shore, they collapsed with a suddenness that made me alarmed for their lives. Several of them drew in their oars and lay literally motionless in the bottom of the boat. I had to struggle into the place of one of them, with infinite danger of a capsize, and it was the clumsy oar of the tea-drinker (for three of whose physique any one of the Achill men, if commonly well fed, would have been more than a match) that principally helped to drag the boat up Achill Sound long after midnight.

A local land-agent coolly told me the next day there was nothing wrong with the men except whiskey. For the credit of human nature, it was a joy to meet the rector of the Protestant Achill Mission, the Rev. Mr. Greer, who all but shed tears over the poor people's sufferings and was closeted daily with the parish priest devising measures to soften the iron hearts of official and

landlord. The most serious proposal up to that time made in the neighbourhood to deal with thousands of starving people was that of an excellent but visionary English colonel, who distributed fowling-pieces among the coastguards to shoot cormorants for the people's use.

There were soon four separate, if not rival, organisations afoot to cope with the distress so long stoutly denied. The Castle made a determined attempt to capture the incoming Lord Mayor (Mr. Gray) and make the Mansion House ancillary to its own appeal. Gray was not, however, to be seduced by a title. He saw all the disadvantages of entrusting the charity of the world to a group of irresponsible officials, who had already cruelly neglected their duty, and, if uncontrolled, would rest unavoidably under the suspicion of dispensing their bounty with a view to the exigencies of governmental policy. He started a Mansion House Fund of his own on a wide National basis, which eventually outstripped the Castle Fund, as well as stimulated the energies of its promoters, and subjected the allocation of its grants to a wholesome control. The Lord-Lieutenant foolishly took offence at the independent action of the Mansion House, and by declining to attend the traditional Lord Mayor's banquet, began that divorce between the Castle and the Mansion House which marked an epoch in the de-anglicisation of Ireland. Gray quietly proceeded to build up his Relief



Fund to £181,000, and left the Lord-Lieutenant alone with his dignity. With the gracious aid of his wife, he turned the Mansion House into a Court, in whose bewitching air and splendid hospitalities the dingy glories of Dublin Castle were soon forgotten.

A third rival confronted Parnell on his American tour. The *New York Herald* had been poisoned against the Irish Cause by the reports of a "disgruntled" special correspondent, who, owing to some obscure *spretæ injuria formæ* of the kind that often colours a stranger's whole view of a country, was pouring forth a daily bombardment of red-hot shot against Parnell, through the columns of his powerful journal, and who, later on, became one of the London *Times*' principal stipendiaries in the work of defaming the Irish leaders. The *New York Herald* threw all its weight into the assault upon Parnell, with the avowed object of driving him out of the country as a fraudulent agitator, repudiated by the great majority of the Irish Members of Parliament, bishops, and priests. Parnell withstood the attack with characteristic calmness; he bore the outcries of the hectoring New York journal with the same provoking equanimity with which he allowed the howls and cat-calls of the House of Commons to exhaust themselves, carried his appeal unperturbed from one great city to another, and so completely succeeded in arousing American attention to the dimensions of the Irish crisis, that the formidable newspaper, which began by undertaking

to hoot him out of America, was forced to conclude by working with all its might to raise an Irish Famine Fund of its own.<sup>1</sup> *The New York Herald*

<sup>1</sup> It was at one of his Boston meetings on this trying tour that the famous orator, Wendell Phillips, began his speech with the exordium: "I have come here to see the man who made John Bull listen." Parnell's business capacity was never better displayed than by the arrangements by which he managed to extract the last cent from his audiences for the object of his visit. "There was always," he used to tell, "a Judge or a General in the chair to give the people a fine speech. Then, when Dillon and I had sufficiently depressed the public with our speeches, we would go through the hall with our hats in our hands, and men would tumble over one another to throw in a 100 dollar bill." He related one amusing experience of one of those great gatherings in the West. The Governor of the State, who presided, and who probably knew little more of the Irish question than the size of the Irish vote in his section, was discussing the evening's proceedings after the meeting in the hotel. "Somehow," he said, "Parnell did not impress me a bit. When I saw this sleek young dude, as well fed as you or I and a darned sight better groomed, I said to myself, 'The *Herald* knows what it's about. The idea of sending out a man like that to tell us they are all starving!' But when the other man, poor Dillon, came along with hunger written on every line of his face, I said, 'Ah! that's a different thing. There's the Irish famine right enough!' and I guess my 500 dollar bill would not wait in my pocket any longer." A procession of State troops and Hibernian military companies, with flags and bands of music, would generally await the Irish envoy at the railway depôt to escort him through the city. It was soon noticed that on these occasions Parnell had a way of disappearing at the back of the train, and not discovering himself until the business meeting in the evening. His explanation in a confidential moment was characteristic. "All that half the people in an American town want to see in these shows is the man. If they can see him for nothing, you won't find them turning up for the collection." Many mistook proceedings like this for the tricks of a mystery man. Many more will doubtless find the hard materialism of his little joke somewhat trying. Nevertheless, there could be no grosser misreading of his character than to attribute such traits to cynicism, or to anything except an honest simplicity and directness of purpose, which was not a selfish purpose. His business was to collect money for starving people, and he took the shrewdest means of achieving his object in the largest measure, in place of basking in the idle popularity of street parades.

little knew its man when it hit upon the device of spiting Parnell by raising an additional £50,000 for his starving countrymen. There was a million of money wanting. Parnell had no small jealousies as to where it was to come from—whether through the agency of the *New York Herald* or of Dublin Castle—since all the world knew it was his agitation which was putting these agencies in motion for purposes of their own. Accordingly, he no sooner found that the *New York Herald* Fund and the Duchess of Marlborough Fund and the Dublin Mansion House Fund were progressing at a rate which relieved him of anxiety as to the pressure of mere famine, than he turned his own energies to the graver object of excising the causes of famine by an appeal to Irish-America to afford him the means of effecting a permanent agrarian revolution. The pawky American journal which undertook to drive the Irish leader out of the States by booming its own Famine Fund, found it had simply succeeded in setting him free to direct his appeals henceforth in a great measure to the collection of a Fighting Fund, which was the nucleus of all the subsequent achievements of the Land League.

While the American tour was in full swing, he was all of a sudden called back to Ireland. Early in March 1880, Disraeli, staggering under the effects of the Midlothian campaign and of the bye-elections that followed, unexpectedly dissolved Parliament on a still more unexpected issue. By one



of those brilliant Asian transformation-scenes with which his life glittered, he published a manifesto to the astonished country, hinting that his adversaries were contemplating the dismemberment of the Empire by some tremendous concession to an Ireland in a state of veiled rebellion. Gladstone, who, far from contemplating at this moment any scheme of Home Rule, or even of further Irish Land Reform—who had scarcely heard of the existence of the Land League, and was absorbed wholly in the exciting controversies of the Balkans and of South Africa—was unable to see anything more serious in his rival's prognostications as to the coming Irish crisis than the device of an Asiatic juggler to humbug the country, by turning away its thoughts from the iniquities of Sir Henry Layard at Constantinople and of Sir Bartle Frere in the Transvaal. Gladstone's great majority of 1880 was, as a matter of fact, returned with no more reference to, or even consciousness of, what was going on in Ireland than if this island lay amidst the icebergs of the Polar Circle.

Parnell's task of reforming the Irish representation seemed an almost hopeless one. Not many people remember that even then his Parliamentary following only consisted of 7 men out of 103 Irish members. The great majority of the men who more or less casually followed Butt, distrusted him, held aloof from him, and, whenever the opportunity safely offered, attacked him. No Irish

daily newspaper gave him more than a qualified allegiance. When he landed in Cork to find the writs for the General Election already sped, all seemed to be confusion. For lack of candidates he had to be nominated himself for three different constituencies—Cork City, Meath, and Mayo—and he had to fly from one coast to the other by special train night after night to make any head against innumerable foes or shifty friends. Only for the fortunate turn the *New York Herald* had unwittingly given to his American tour, even funds enough to pay for the special trains would scarcely have been forthcoming. The Election Fund of the Carlton Club had actually to be resorted to for payment of his own election expenses in Cork City. His candidate for the borough of Mallow was ignominiously defeated by a Castle lawyer, who was thus enabled to climb into an Attorney-Generalship and a Judgeship. Of more than a hundred priests in the constituency of Cork City, only two young curates ventured to take sides with him, and these were promptly dealt with by the Bishop for their offence. The Bishop himself made a public speech repudiating the new Dictator. Electoral spirit was even still at so low an ebb, that it was with a thrill of relief the country learned that Parnell had come even second on the poll in the most National city of Ireland, the first being a local Whig mediocrity who had been a consistent supporter of Coercion Acts. Four bishops published a joint

manifesto against his candidate for the great county of Cork,<sup>1</sup> who was hopelessly distanced at the polls by Colonel Colthurst, an amiable Catholic gentleman of an all but invisible Home Rule tinge.

Through good fortune or ill, Parnell fought on to the last polling-booth, and carried the war into the most seemingly inveterate *partes infidelium*. The result was an amazing one. In mere numbers his followers were still only thirty-five all told, but they included a band of young men who would have made the fortune of any party—men of high Nationalist traditions and varied intellectual endowments—"landless resolute," unmarried, unfettered—ready for any danger—free from the slightest craving for ministerial preferment—holding the most venerated English Parliamentary conventions in inexpressible contempt—content to battle their way through the House of Commons as a foreign body, neither giving nor expecting quarter, with eyes for nothing but the interests and the public opinion of their own country, misruled, wasted, and despised by this ignorant and stolid, and apparently irresistible, alien assembly—and never more joyously satisfied that they were doing their duty with effect than when they had an infuriated House of Commons shouting at them, and the Press of England baying in chorus at their heels, since they knew Parlia-

<sup>1</sup> Mr. A. J. Kettle, whom Parnell, in a moment of perfectly solemn, and perhaps unconscious, pleasantry, described in one of his speeches as "a man whose name is a household word in every cabin in this land."



mentary insurrection to be the indispensable preliminary to Parliamentary redress. Since Pym and Selden first began to startle the Stuarts, the House of Commons had beheld no minority so daring, so single-minded, or destined to accomplish so wide a change in Parliamentary institutions. Nor was the intestine discord which had so often delivered England from her fear of Irish combinations to show itself for many years to come. The new Party were bound together with triple hoops of steel by their necessities, as not only a minority of the House, but a minority of the Irish minority. They were inspired by the blithe comradeship of generous youth, conscious of the power of striking brilliant intellectual blows in a historic conflict, and, above all, by the influence of a great leader, which was as lightly felt as the pressure of the atmosphere, but was no less steady and vitalising.

Parnell had less to do than is generally supposed with the choice of his lieutenants. Take the case of Mr. T. P. O'Connor as an example. If he had gone to Galway as an extreme Nationalist, it is doubtful whether, under the corrupt conditions of borough representation at the time, he could have won the seat at all. He was elected as an old and brilliant student of the local Queen's College. I am not sure that he had even met the Irish leader. All that was known (or indeed asked) about his politics was that he had lived long amidst English Radical associations and was supposed to be one of

the rising hopes of that Party. Had he used his election to serve a selfish ambition, his way towards a seat in the first Liberal Cabinet, if not eventually to the highest seat, was assured. Nobody since Mr. Chamberlain's "Radical days" has arisen to give the Radicals the predominance which his masterful powers of debate and sunny personality might have won for them. If "T. P." without a qualm sacrificed his English interests to become one of the most dashing outlaws of the Irish Party, and one of the most precious elements of its cohesiveness as well as brilliancy, Parnell's genius is no doubt to be thanked for deciding his choice, but was wholly without influence over the choice of Galway.

No less accidental, so far as Parnell's prevision went, was the accession of Mr. James J. O'Kelly, who became one of the most potent influences in the secret councils of the Party, and enjoyed the confidence of his chief in intimate and momentous affairs to a greater degree than any of his colleagues, with, perhaps, an exception that Mr. O'Kelly would be the first to acknowledge. This fine soldier, who had passed through the most dangerous episodes of the Fenian struggle unscathed, who had ruffled through the Algerian campaigns among the dare-devils of the Foreign Legion, who had exhausted all the romances of Mexican adventure in the army of Bazaine, and who, when the General Election came, had only just been set free from the Spanish

prison, where he lay under sentence of being shot for his exploits as special correspondent of the *New York Herald* during the Cuban Insurrection, might possibly never have been a member of the Irish Party, if he had allowed himself to be swayed by Parnell's advice. He thought it madness for an unknown Irish-American, without money or even any known gift of speech, to go down to the vast county of Roscommon at a few days' notice, to challenge the ascendancy of the O'Connor Don, surrounded with all the prestige of his royal pedigree and of a quarter of a century's possession, and supported by the unbroken strength of the Bishop and priests and of the landlords. He tried hard to dissuade Mr. O'Kelly from the raid on Roscommon. Human foresight, indeed, might well have refused to contemplate the possibility of the astonishing victory, which burst through these ancient ramparts as through matchwood, and, as with a rush of revolutionary pikes, carried into the new Party a colleague whose daring turned out to be so happily combined with wisdom that he came to be known among his brother-members as "the Fenian Whig," and whose style of speaking, brief and abrupt as the reports of a man emptying the chambers of a revolver, was chastened by a pretty and even romantic courtesy, worthy of French soldiership at its best.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> One of the most foolish episodes of my life was a challenge to a duel I was induced to bring on Mr. O'Kelly's behalf to a Mr.



The original Party of Obstruction of the days when "We were Seven" contained two men of striking gifts, who were already beginning to fall away from the flag—Mr. O'Connor Power, who, perhaps under personal circumstances of which to know all would be to pardon a great deal, allowed himself gradually to be seduced into attacks on his old comrades, amidst the heady cheers of the Government benches; and Mr. Frank Hugh O'Donnell, whose idiosyncrasy, best described by the German term *Particularismus*, grown to a disease, spoiled his rich store of abilities, and soon made him a hopelessly unclubbable colleague.<sup>1</sup> But their place

M'Coan, member for Wicklow, who had lived much abroad. Mr. M'Coan made himself still more ridiculous by invoking the protection of the House of Commons. The affair would have ended amidst general laughter, only for Mr. O'Kelly's grave and soldierly speech of one sentence in reply to an appeal from Gladstone. "The hon. member and I," he said, "have lived in lands where a certain code is the recognised rule of life among men of honour, and now that the member for Wicklow shrinks from complying with the requirements of that code, he sinks out of the category of honourable men, and I have no difficulty in saying I shall carry the matter no further." For probably the only time in this generation, the House of Commons found itself bowing in mute respect before a duellist. Mr. O'Kelly had levelled his pistol and brought down his man before the House could recover from its surprise.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Healy hit upon his weak spot, and at the same time sealed his political fate, by the change of a letter in his name: he dubbed him "Mr. Crank Hugh O'Donnell." Mr. O'Donnell's grand passion in politics was a confederation of all the discontented races of the Empire under the lead of the Irish Party. He once brought down some scores of dusky students of all the races and creeds of Hindustan to the House of Commons, to tender their solemn allegiance to Mr. Parnell—to the wonder of the policemen and the quidnuncs of the Lobby. The moment, however, the Party appointed a committee to see what could be made of his foreign policy, we found the project had lost all its charm for him. Perhaps the most savage thing ever

was taken by three men of Parliamentary abilities such as few empires, with all the splendid prizes of office in their gift, can command in their public servants. The most conspicuous figure of the three in character, if not in intellect, was Mr. John Dillon, who came in for the county of Tipperary. He thus inherited the seat held by his father, who had come out of the ordeal of the Young Ireland Insurrection with the unspotted reputation of one who had been the last to consent to the call to arms, but the first to affront its perils and to endure with a quiet fortitude the sufferings and ruin which followed. The languorous and halting monotony of his own speeches during the Mitchel election had already given way to the mysterious ardour by which even plain words, straight from the heart, can send an electric current through a crowd, and the transparent sincerity that shone from his worn face conquered the respect of men in the House of Commons who listened to his language with horror. "I should hang you, Mr. Dillon, if I got the chance, but I should be infinitely sorry," remarked a fine old Tory Admiral, Sir John Hay, who used to sit near us during the Gladstone administration.

said by Mr. W. E. Forster, in the hour of his own great failure, was said at the expense of Mr. O'Donnell. Forster was repeating one of his half-crazy charges against Parnell and his colleagues of connivance at crime. "Oh! Oh! Shame! Shame!" cried Mr. O'Donnell from the opposite side of the House. "I was not referring to the hon. member for Dungarvan," was Forster's pitiless retort; "I cannot imagine any sane body of men for any good or evil purpose taking the hon. member into their confidence."

Everybody in the House, outside the Irish group, would have, on the contrary, joined in hanging Mr. T. M. Healy with a whoop, prime favourite as he has become amongst them in later times ; and the Tim of the days of his "early manner" would have chuckled over the whoop as the highest compliment they could pay him. His theory of the uses to which the House of Commons should be consigned by Irishmen was one compared to which Mr. Willie Redmond's precognition of it, as a place where Cossacks would yet stable their horses, was delicacy and moderation. A quarter of an hour after he took his seat as member for Wexford he started up to make his maiden speech—tiny of frame, sardonic of visage, his hands in his breeches pockets, as coolly insolent as a Parisian gamin roaming through the Tuileries Palace at the heels of Louis-Philippe, making havoc of the pictures and mirrors, as entirely detestable as a small Diogenes peering out over the rims of his pince-nez, as from his tub, through bilious eyes, over his contemptible audience—and horrified the House of Commons with the following exordium : "Mr. Speaker, if the noble Marquis" (Hartington) "thinks he is going to bully us with his high and mighty Cavendish ways, all I can tell him is he will find himself knocked into a cocked hat in a jiffy, and we will have to put him to the necessity of wiping the blood of all the Cavendishes from his noble nose a good many times before he disposes of us." Outside the exceedingly small circle of



friends who really knew him, his disagreeableness was displayed to those of his own way of thinking all but as offensively as to foes. He had as great a physical horror of shaking hands, even with his closest friends, as a miser would have of pulling out his purse. His theory of life was to regard everybody as an enemy until the contrary was proved. He affected a brutality of speech at which Rabelais or Swift in his least dainty moment might have hesitated. I once heard him conclude a harangue with this unique peroration: "I have nothing more to say to you: I have discharged my stomach." His more serious faults of temperament and his superb powers as a Parliamentary swordsman were still undeveloped and unsuspected. The House of Commons for a long time regarded Tim as a mere larrikin, though a diabolically clever one. The crowd, whom his irony and wild paradoxes only puzzled, took very much the same view, except that they delighted to see his impish tricks practised against their local tyrants and their wincing Saxon rulers. To the House of Commons he was simply hateful and hurtful, and as Ireland's business for the hour was just to make her power hateful and hurtful, both he and the Irish people were completely content with his rôle. It was only the half-dozen or dozen men who knew his amazing fertility of intellectual resource, his devouring industry, his resolute ambition, his eloquence of tongue and pen, rich with plentiful and sometimes not too reverent

borrowings from the Old Testament, who knew how very much greater things were before him. Few even of those who saw clearly enough the uncertainty of temper, the bursts of fierce clansman's passion, the lack of rigid governing principle, the love of eccentric and risky paradoxes, which always led us to take his view of any particular question as *prima facie* evidence that the opposite view was the wise one ; in a word, that absence of a well-balanced judgment which alone disqualified him for unmistakable and incontestable greatness—few even of these, except perhaps Parnell, whose reserves as to Mr. Healy began at an astonishingly early period of the movement, could see any reason to anticipate that these weaknesses were destined to turn his best qualities awry, and to exact so heavy a price for his unquestionably splendid services to his country.

The habit our people have borrowed from Plutarch of always contrasting a Numa and a Lycurgus, or an Aristides and a Cato the Censor, caused the names of Mr. Healy and Mr. Thomas Sexton to be linked together from the outset in a comparison which ended in a lifelong rivalry of some bitterness. Nevertheless, except that both were young men of superb intellectual capacity, and had no other early educational advantages than those they owed to the noble order of Christian Brothers, and that both had come to light unexpectedly and, as it seemed, by mere chance, from the diamond-quarries of native genius, their powers were the

complement the one of the other, rather than a cause of mutual depreciation. Mr. Sexton's breadth of view, his dignity of language and grasp of great principles and, in a special manner, of financial intricacies, completed in a debate the effect of his nimble colleague's airier and more pungent sallies. His power of producing an endless profusion of long-drawn and smooth-flowing sentences, in language of extraordinary opulence and in a spontaneous form as faultless as if every word had been carefully premeditated, was only exceeded, and not greatly exceeded, by Gladstone among his Parliamentary contemporaries. He had another of the great qualifications of Parliamentary success—an interest in the fortunes of debate which seemed almost to exclude all other interests. He would sit alone by the hour, or the half-dozen hours, watching the sword-play even of some dull debate, with the passion which chains a Spaniard to his seat at a bull-feast. He was able to repeat, from a marvellous memory, every retort and rejoinder from side to side, as faithfully as if his brain were a sheet of shorthand-notes; and he was ready at a moment's notice to step down himself into the arena and wave his scarf and plant his spear with a master hand. When the darts of that still more provoking Toreador, Mr. Healy, eventually made the arena distasteful to him and caused his withdrawal from Parliamentary life, his old colleagues were lost in wonder and incredulity at the decision



that reduced those magnificent oratorical gifts to silence, and exchanged the theatre of his glory and, as it seemed, of his fondest interest for the obscure successes of a commercial career. If he has not left a deeper impression on the history of his generation, the fact can only be attributed to the nervous sensibilities which are so often the penalty of fine talents, to the superabundance of words which sometimes watered off his best arguments into diffuseness, and perhaps to an excess of that logical rigidity which sometimes made him overlook the practical effect of principles and figures in real life, through an almost morbidly clear view of the abstract demands of right reasoning and stern finance.

Another of the young paladins of the new group had come in already for New Ross, in the person of Mr. John Redmond. His frank and handsome presence, his self-restraint of manner, and remarkable faculty of lucid and captivating oratory, gave early promise, which he has not disappointed, of success in a House which has by no means lost the gusto for grace and ornament of speech. Still another of the unexpected nuggets which the General Election dug out of the Irish diamond-field was a young Waterford solicitor named Edmund Leamy, who typified, perhaps better than any of the rest, the charms and foibles of the Keltic genius. An eloquence of the rarest stamp, flashing at unlooked-for moments like live lightning out of the darkness,

all fire and poetry and wayward force, but then, again, lost in the night of Keltic uncertainty, shyness, depression, or mere indolence—lovable even for his faults, and irritating for his obstinate failure to give his capacities fair play—Edmund Leamy was one of the best types I ever met both of the half-resigned ineffectiveness which sometimes tempts one to despair of our race, and of the glowing depths of divine passion which inspire us with an undying belief in and love for the unhappy land apostrophised in Mr. T. D. Sullivan's illogical but—to an Irishman—wholly comprehensible lines :

We've heard her faults a hundred times—the new ones and  
the old—  
In songs and sermons, rants and rhymes, enlarged a hundred-  
fold ;  
But take them all, the great and small, and this we've got to  
say—  
Here's dear old Ireland, brave old Ireland, Ireland, boys,  
hurrah !

From an older school—that of the young men who had kindled at reading Thomas Davis's verses in the *Nation*, and seen William Smith O'Brien in the dock at Clonmel receiving his sentence of death with the proud courtesy of a simple-hearted gentleman—there came an accession more valuable still. Those who only knew Justin M'Carthy from his books, or in his own sunny social atmosphere, puzzled their wits in vain to guess what could be the attraction for this successful and happy-hearted

literary man of middle age of a seat amongst a set of rough-tongued, lawless Ishmaelites, who were the objects of all but unanimous detestation in the House of Commons, and whose methods better befitted the backwoods camp than the cloisters of Academe. An enormous Nonconformist reading public had come to read the tranquil pages of *The Waterdale Neighbours* and *Dear Lady Disdain* with the same gentle confidence of finding there charming philosophy and sweet reasonableness as if Mr. M'Carthy's novels were newly-discovered Apocryphal Gospels. They were almost as much shocked to hear of their favourite novelist taking his place among the Irish outlaws as if they had found infernal machines planted under their suburban flower-beds. It is, I think, certain that, in joining the Irish Party, Mr. M'Carthy parted at least for a time with most of his readers, as well as with all his pleasant leisure. He had henceforth to write his daily non-political article for the *Daily News* at a table upstairs in the inner Lobby, from which he could hear the war raging inside between his colleagues and the Government, of which the *Daily News* was the chief organ ; and having finished his allotted span of "copy," he would be himself, ten minutes afterwards, in the thick of the battle.

No Irishman of our time made heavier sacrifices. That he would not have stopped short of still heavier ones, none who knew the inmost man could doubt. Mr. T. P. O'Connor's *mot* : "One could



almost wish Justin M'Carthy had been hanged, if it were only to show how a quiet man could die for Ireland," only expressed the feeling of all who have seen him in hours of crisis. Having a keen sense of humour, he would be the last to repeat for himself the somewhat transpontine boast : *Si fractus illabatur orbis, Impavidum me ferient ruinae* ; but of no man could it be with more certainty said that, if the ruins of a falling world were tumbling around him, they would find him not merely unafraid, but cheerful. His sweetness of nature did not in the least lessen his firmness upon the proper occasion. When our intestine conflicts in the non-Parnellite Party were at their worst, in 1893, Mr. Healy and one of the most formidable-looking bruisers of his section waited on Mr. M'Carthy to warn him that if he, as Chairman of the Party, took sides against him at a Party meeting to be held in the afternoon, Mr. Healy and nineteen of his colleagues would secede. "That," remarked the Chairman, gently stroking his beard, "would be very unfortunate—for the nineteen. Time is up for our meeting. Tim, let us have a glass of grog."

On another of those horrid occasions, when a passage of arms took place between Mr. Healy, whom his friends styled "The man in the gap," and myself, whose forehead had been split open in a recent election riot in Cork, the Chairman threw oil upon the rising waters of Party strife with the quaint remark : "For goodness' sake, don't let us fall out

about this slight difference. There is a good deal to be said for the Man in the Gap, and perhaps there is a good deal to be said too for the Gap in the Man." Smarting under the sting of the Kilkenny election, Parnell, during one of our conversations at Boulogne, expressed in his own way his sense of how awkward an antagonist Mr. M'Carthy could be upon occasion. I was urging upon him that, if men like M'Carthy had been forced to declare against him, he might be sure it was not through any desire to wound him. "My dear O'Brien," was the reply, "you don't know that old gentleman when he wields his umbrella."

The personal relations between the two rival chiefs were among the few gleams of light through the foul darkness of the split of 1890, and were thoroughly characteristic of the two men. Upon the night when Parnell was composing his famous Manifesto, Mr. M'Carthy, who was the leader of the opposition in Committee Room 15, was his brother-guest at the house of Dr. Fitzgerald, M.P. They sat smoking and sipping their grog after dinner, while Parnell sat at a side-table stringing together the historic document which was to proclaim the irreconcilable rupture of the alliance with Gladstone, and to make the never-to-be-forgotten appeal to the Irish race "not to throw him to the English wolves." At last he started up with relief from the agonies composition always cost him, and, lighting his cigar, cried : "Now, Justin, it's all over

except the peroration. What shall it be?" "I'm afraid, Parnell," was the prompt response, "it ought to be a quotation from Grattan: 'I watched over the cradle of Irish Liberty, and now I am following it to its tomb.'" But to the last the relations between the two men continued to be such as to redeem the horrors of that time of mad and savage misunderstanding. I have related elsewhere that the last time I ever saw Parnell, after all the ferocious strife of the Kilkenny contest, he came up to me in company with Mr. M'Carthy in the Lobby of the House of Commons. "Why," said I, "who should ever have expected to see this trio met together?" "Yes," said Parnell, with one of his softest smiles, "Justin and I have been over to the City together about the Paris Funds, to the admiration of all beholders." But we were still many a year of glorious comradeship before those days of earthquake chasms. The Justin M'Carthy who took service under Parnell's perilous flag in 1880 brought to his cause some faint and tender perfume of the Young Ireland days to soften the harsher necessities of later and more grimly practical methods. He brought also the unchanging cheerfulness that, at private junketing or public banquet, caused his colleagues to warm themselves in his presence as before a merry Christmas fire, and the unblemished reputation which silenced even the most stolid English prejudice, and must have made the augurs of the *Times* newspaper smile in one



another's faces when they made of Justin M'Carthy one of the darkest of the cloaked and Guy-Fawkes-hatted conspirators who plotted the Phoenix Park murders in a railway carriage at Willesden Junction.

A queerly different, though still more potent figure, was that of Mr. Joseph Gillis Biggar, who had as little in common with Justin M'Carthy as a commercial ledger has with a book of sonnets, save that they had both reached a later middle age and were both devotedly attached to Ireland and to their leader. There is some doubt whether Biggar was not the actual inventor of Parliamentary obstruction, and consequently the author of an immortal chapter in the Parliamentary history of every modern European state. It is certain that in the beginning the newspapers, and even the Irish people, spoke of "Biggar and Parnell," rather than of "Parnell and Biggar." My own conclusion is that it was Biggar who, in the joy with which he paid back the insolence of the House of Commons, first discovered what an instrument of torture systematic obstruction, placed in the hands of a few resolute men, might be ; but it was Parnell who perceived that the new weapon was not merely a means of inflicting a school-boyish vengeance on an obnoxious member whose Bill was blocked, or an overbearing majority whose dinner was spoiled, but was capable of dislocating the entire machinery of Government at will, and, consequently (for he always looked to the practical results), gave to a disarmed Ireland a more formid-

able power as against her rulers than if she could have risen in armed insurrection. These far-seeing designs did not agitate Biggar ; still less did it ever occur to his simple and upright soul to speculate as to what was his own share of merit for the invention. In politics, as in his own bacon trade, he was simply a man of business, honest as the sun and stern as the multiplication table. It was enough for him to see he had only to brave the hatred of the House of Commons and talk excellent common-sense of the most abysmal dulness by the hour, to see powerful Ministers wince, and cause a Parliament, that wanted to hear nothing of Ireland, hear of practically nothing else every night of their lives, and he set himself to his task "unshaken, unseduced, unterrified," with the same conscientious assiduity with which the Chaplain read out the prayers before business. Once in a way, Biggar showed some trace of the pawky humour of the Scoto-Irish race from which he sprang. After he had made himself hoarse with three hours' speaking, consisting chiefly of readings from Blue Books, the Speaker, hoping to bring him to a close, intimated that he really could not hear what the hon. member was saying. "Quite right, Mr. Speaker," was the bland response ; "the acoustic properties of this House are something shocking. I will come nearer." And, gathering up his Blue Books and documents, Biggar cheerfully trotted off to the front Opposition Bench, and, to oblige Mr. Speaker, began his oration all over again *da capo*.

He was, without exception, the most fearless man I ever met. Others, greatly fearing, might defy their fears ; to him there was no merit in fearlessness, inasmuch as the sensation of fear was simply inconceivable, like a missing sense of smell. When he "espied strangers" on an historic occasion, for the purpose of having the Prince of Wales turned out of the Gallery, he enjoyed the looks of rage and hate darted at him from the eyes of five hundred horrified colleagues, as another man would enjoy a fine wine. It was business, and not in the least a mere elfish delight in worrying the Prince, as slow-witted Englishmen supposed. In later and happier years, when it was equally good business for Ireland, he walked into the Lobby with a beaming face to vote an addition of £30,000 a year to the Prince's income. Rude he was in speech as a William of Deloraine, but rudeness was his war-time armour and not his inmost nature. His brutality to Gladstone sometimes stirred the Liberal Party to fury. He once, when the great old man was referring with paternal fondness to his son Herbert, suggested that the Premier could not do better than "apprentice young Hopeful to Marwood" (the hangman) "for service in Ireland." On another occasion, when we had been by files and platoons raking the Irish Secretary with a severity only less barbarous than his own Coercion Act, Gladstone, who had been listening with a face of anguish, started up to make one of his pathetic



appeals for *mores humaniores* between the two peoples, which melted the hearts of the most reckless of our rough-riders. "Hon. members," he said, in one of the softest stops of his noble organ-voice, "will perhaps give more indulgence to my appeal because, in the nature of things, I cannot hope that this voice will be heard much longer in this House." "Hear, hear!" rang out Biggar's harsh crow of exultation, horrible as a pistol-shot in the midst of the solemn hush. I am bound to say that the cry instantly cut short the Grand Old Man's sublime flight, and brought him down to the level of poor human frailty. His lion-head pricked up, as at the smart of a bullet-wound, and it was with a face of scarcely more sweetness than that of his grim antagonist he proceeded: "I note the expression of subternatural glee which sits upon the visage of the hon. member for Cavan." To which the hon. member for Cavan responded with another "Hear, hear!" of perfect satisfaction.

But neither Gladstone nor the indignant House yet knew "the heart-wood" of the real Biggar underneath the gnarled bark. There were few things more touching in the hard relations of Parliamentary life than the shy tenderness with which, in the days of Gladstone's Home Rule struggle and of his defeat, Biggar would sidle up to Mr. Herbert Gladstone and whisper: "Hope your father is well, mister? Glad to hear it, mister!" A far more severe trial of his patriotism was to

relinquish obstruction when obstruction had done its work. The old Adam so far survived that when he himself subsided into one of the most decorous and unobtrusive supporters of the Home Rule Government, he would instruct the young men of the Party, by the half-dozen, how to block the Bills of obnoxious private members, and sit quietly chuckling, like a hen-mother over her chicks, when after midnight his catechumens, one after one, raised their hats with the fatal "I object." Once, in the height of our wars with Mr. Balfour, Biggar came up to Dr. Tanner (one of his most promising *élèves*), as the House was breaking up after the Session, and said, "Dr. Tanner, I understand you're going to jail for the winter?" "Yes, Mr. Biggar, I daresay I will," was the somewhat startled reply. "That's all right," pursued the other without changing a muscle; "but it would be advisable you should get into jail as quickly as you can, so that you may be out in time to attend to your blocks when the House meets." He, in reality, was more concerned for Dr. Tanner's prison sufferings than was the genial doctor himself. I have heard, and can easily believe, that when the prison experiences of another of his colleagues were under discussion, there was a tear trembling in his eye. In his Obstruction days he found the material for many an hour of dreary speech-making in the case of a mysterious "Mr. Clear." On the Naval Estimates and on every conceivable occasion "Mr. Biggar—to call attention to the case of Mr. Clear"

—became a standing heading in the Orders of the day. The House, who never listened to Biggar's two-hour explanations, had a suspicion that Mr. Clear was in the position of Sairey Gamp's friend, Mrs. Harris, and that "there was no sich a person." Mr. Clear, however, was a perfectly authentic personage, a poor inventor who had been scandalously treated by the Admiralty, as inventors will so often be. The poor man used to glide into the Lobby, like a pathetic ghost, to listen to Biggar's sympathetic exposition of his grievances, and there is every reason to believe that Biggar's stealthy generosity, as well as sympathising tongue, did much to console Mr. Clear for the trials of genius and the niggardliness of the Admiralty. The time, indeed, came when the West Cavan ogre became all but as great a favourite in the House of Commons as in West Cavan, without ever abating a jot of his principles or softening a consonant in his uncompromising style of speech. Even with the Three Judges of the Parnell Commission, he who, according to the "Parnellism and Crime" tracts, was to be one of the worst of the criminals, came to be one of the Court's prime favourites. He defended himself, and whenever the spirit moved him, would start up and fling out his eye-glass to harpoon the attention of Sir James Hannen, and then, with one thumb gracefully inserted under the armhole of his waistcoat and the other hand wielding the glasses, would launch out into one of



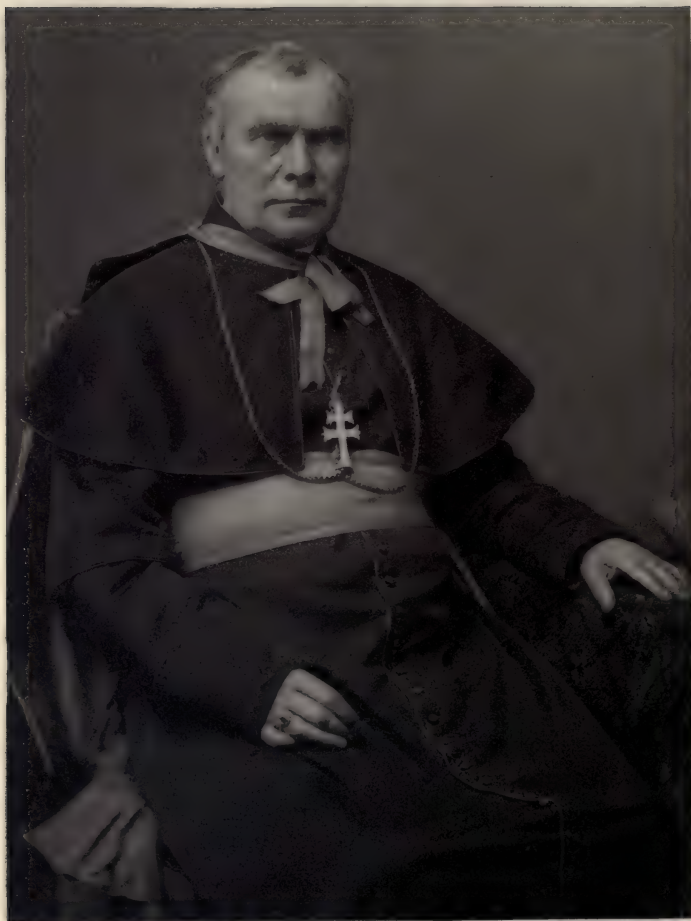
those quaint, candid, indomitable little speeches of his, repeating with interest every sentiment that horrified the *Times*, but doing so with a pellucid honesty that made the Court thankful to be face to face with the Irish Difficulty in all its reality and sincerity, for better, for worse. If Biggar did not live to see the full fruition of his country's hopes, he enjoyed one blessing which was denied to every other Irish Leader, since King Brian Boromhe, who went before him or has followed him—he died in the arms of victory. On the night he died, he had only just come home from the House of Commons, where he had acted as the successful teller in a Division in which a majority of the members of the House of Commons, convinced Home Rulers and no less convinced of its approaching triumph, were with him in the Lobby, where he had so often been one of a group of half-a-dozen friendless and detested pariahs. Wolfe, on the victorious Plains of Abraham, had not a happier ending.

Ireland has never wanted leaders: this was only the second time for a century when she found A Leader. I have already disposed of the fiction that Parnell created, or even to any great extent chose, his men. It might as well be said that Mirabeau or Danton or Napoleon created the French Revolution. There was another fiction current in later days, and still more baseless, that it was to the ability of his lieutenants, rather than to his own, that his success was due. The absurdity of this contention

will be made abundantly evident in these pages. From the country's throes came forth a staff of astonishing brilliancy and variety of talent. They formed a wonderful bundle of rods, but Parnell was not merely the thong that held them together, he was the keen blade of the axe that gave them half their force. If, when at last the bond fell asunder, it was found possible with infinite pains to reconstruct our Irish fasces from the same material, the success, such as it was, was due to Parnell's unenvious gift of developing all the several capacities of his lieutenants and opening up to them freely a road to the affections of their countrymen. They were Neys and Murats lighting up the battlefield with many a glittering charge, but, for the five first years at all events, his was the eye that measured the ground, and he was the Leader of chilled steel that planned and won the battles.







Lawrence Davis Photo

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x J. W. Army

## CHAPTER XII

### THE ROCK OF CASHEL AND ITS ARCHBISHOP-KING

1880

THE danger of Famine continued until the end of July 1880, and was only warded off by the distribution of more than £500,000 worth of food (mostly Indian meal) by the various Charitable Committees. The terror of starvation, and the heartlessness with which the landlords strove by distrains for rent and evictions to appropriate to themselves the relief intended by charitable subscribers for hungry women and children, caused the Land League agitation to overspread the country with the fierceness of a forest fire. Parnell's watchword at the Westport meeting, "Keep a firm grip of your homesteads!" followed by his fresh watchword, "Hold the harvest!" as soon as the meagre harvest of that autumn was gathered in, ran through the people's ranks with the electric force of one of Napoleon's Orders of the Day to his armies.

It is not generally remembered that the existence of the Land League from its formation to its suppression covered only the short term of two years,

and that Mr. Davitt was only left on the scene of the agitation for fourteen months of that period ; but he utilised his brief period of activity with indefatigable energy in the Western agitation, and to still more effect in setting important auxiliary forces in the United States in motion. The motto-programme of the agitation : "Ireland for the Irish, and the Land for the People!" was for the first part taken from the old cry of O'Connell, and for the second, from the new evangel of Mr. Henry George. That happy phrase "The Land for the People!" bore three different meanings for as many differing schools of agitators. For the mass of the Irish tenantry, as well as for Parnell and his Parliamentary followers, it meant the conversion of the 450,000 rent-paying tenants into proprietors of their own holdings by State purchase ; for the small holders of the province of Connaught, among whom the agitation originated, it meant not merely the purchase of their existing holdings, which were too small and poor to support life, but the restoration to the people's use of the enormous tracts of rich grazing lands from which their fathers had been extirpated in the hideous "Clearances" of the Great Famine (and of this special problem there was no particular mention in the original programme of the Land League, nor was it, indeed, understood at all for many years afterwards outside the cabins of the congested districts); and "the Land for the People" had still another meaning for Mr. Davitt,



for whom it spelled Nationalisation of the Land as contemplated in Mr. Henry George's enticing dreams. Mr. Davitt, indeed, openly dissented from the principal operative clause of the original Land League programme, which laid down 'Twenty Years' Purchase at Griffith's Valuation as the basis of Land Purchase. This was his first serious conflict of opinion with Parnell. He did not, however, air his dissent in public, and was content to hold his own views in reserve, while the great common programme of the Abolition of Landlordism was going forward. To the Irish tenantry, for their part, neither then nor ever afterwards, was Nationalisation of the Land anything but an abstraction. What they understood and loved in Mr. Davitt was not the philosopher—more often than not he spoke above the heads of his listeners<sup>1</sup>—but the one-armed Fenian chief, the darling son of their own Mayo, evicted like themselves, saturated with a hatred of Landlordism as fierce as their own, returning untamed by penal servitude to the old struggle, by new methods, perhaps, but with the old unconquered men gathering behind him. They followed and worshipped the man, without comprehending, or indeed heeding, the theories, which, for the rest, whatever they might be, were sure to be generous and single-minded.

Almost every one of the twenty or thirty public

<sup>1</sup> Parnell used to say, "Davitt would get stoned by the farmers, only he talks Greek to them."

speeches he delivered in Ireland before he was thrust back into penal servitude was occupied largely with denunciations of agrarian crime, and expressions of abhorrence of those forms of barbaric vengeance into which men in the more backward and hunger-driven districts were sometimes betrayed in their first fury, before any regular organisation was formed among them to inspire them with confidence in lawful and bloodless agitation.<sup>1</sup> It is an indelible disgrace for English government in Ireland, that the reward of the man who thus specially signalised himself by an incessant war upon crime, and by exhortations which some of his friends, perhaps, considered excessive, to the Irish people, to place their confidence in the Democracy of England, was that, after little more than a year's exertions upon

<sup>1</sup> An amusing instance may be related of the difficulties of Mr. Davitt's missionary labours in the disturbed districts. He once made a journey to the South of Ireland to inveigh against a series of moonlighting outrages which were being exploited in the English Press to the prejudice of the Irish Cause. The principal form outrage had taken in the district was the destruction of emergency cattle, with which Lord —— was grazing evicted farms on his property. The moonlighters took the ingenious vengeance of eating as well as killing the cattle, so as to deprive the evictor of compensation for the loss of the cattle, by destroying all evidence that they had been killed. After a speech in which he denounced the moonlighters roundly to a crowd, who listened to him in a respectful but somewhat incredulous silence, Mr. Davitt was entertained at dinner in the local hotel. After dinner he was waited upon by a group of stalwart young men, the ringleader of whom said: "That was a fine speech of yours to-day, Mr. Davitt. You were a bit hard on the boys, but they have no grudge against you for it. I hope you made a good dinner, anyway." "Never ate a primer piece of beef in my life," replied the visitor. "I'm not surprised at that," remarked the moonlight captain; "it was the best cut off one of Lord ——'s bullocks!"

the Land League platform, Mr. Davitt was suddenly, without trial, and even without the allegation of a new offence, carried off from Ireland, and remitted to penal servitude in Portland Prison, on a mere technical withdrawal of his ticket-of-leave, to the indescribable anguish and indignation of his fellow-countrymen. The scene in the House of Commons, when Sir William Harcourt announced that Mr. Davitt had been reconsigned to a common felon's cell, and when almost the entire House, in one of those fits of brute animal passion that will sometimes carry away even the most civilised assemblies, hailed the announcement with approving yells, did more than a generation of secret conspiracies could have done to associate England in the Irish imagination with a stroke of cowardly and squalid vengeance upon an all too generous adversary.<sup>1</sup> Sir William Harcourt was, personally, a kind and even tender-hearted man. By his orders, Mr. Davitt's new spell of penal servitude was a very different experience indeed from the old. He was supplied with books in abundance, and was allowed to while away his time in cultivating the garden of the Governor of the prison. But the mischief had been done when an eminent Irish public man was struck down as a ticket-of-leave man amidst the cheers of the House of Commons. That he should have been sub-

<sup>1</sup> The effect upon myself was that I instantly offered myself to Mr. Egan for any post of danger in which I might be useful. I was in such a state of health at the time, however, that he replied: "My dear boy, if you want to go to your own funeral, we don't—just yet."



sequently treated not as a ticket-of-leave man but as a political prisoner is more creditable to the hearts than to the logical consistency of his captors. The outrage took place in the eyes of all the world ; the official act of contrition was made in secret, and the seeds of misunderstanding and blind hatred between the two peoples had been sown broadcast in the meantime.

It is possible that the greatest practical service, next to the example of his own unselfish life, which Mr. Davitt rendered to the Land League movement was, that he was the means of attracting to the movement the enormous revolutionary force of Mr. Patrick Forde's famous newspaper, the *Irish World*. No man and no newspaper was ever the subject of wilder misunderstanding or more savage calumny than Mr. Forde and his organ. The prevalent English belief that he was the paymaster of the Land League, and dictated its policy, is an absurdity which could only have imposed upon the credulous public that was taken in by Richard Pigott's forgeries. The great bulk of the American subscriptions to the Land League and its successors came from people who heartily disliked Mr. Forde's extreme opinions. One of England's fatal mistakes about Ireland is to suppose that the mass of the Irish in America are either revolutionarily-minded or irreconcilable. It is only outbursts of irreconcilability in England's own Press and Parliament that give the Irish-American revolutionists their force.

Nay, Mr. Forde himself, and his journal, ever since Gladstone proved the possibility of reconciling Irish National aspirations with the British connection, have been the most steadfast moderating forces, and the most consistent advocates of a reasonable international settlement, upon which Gladstonian statesmanship could have counted in its most sanguine dreams.

But at the time I am writing of, neither England nor even Gladstone knew so much as that there was an Irish Difficulty to be coped with. Nothing less than the ringing of every revolutionary bell an Irish hand could tug at would arouse them. The storm-bell of the *Irish World* boomed across the Atlantic with a very audible note of alarm indeed, that was heard in every mountain-glen in Ireland. There was scarcely a cabin in the West to which some relative in America did not despatch a weekly copy of the *Irish World*, flaming all over from the first line to the last with pictures of the havoc wrought by Landlordism, and incitements to Irish manhood to lie down no longer like a herd of starving mendicants in a land of plenty. It was as if some vast Irish-American invasion was sweeping the country with new and irresistible principles of Liberty and Democracy. The effect of the *Irish World's* teachings was all the greater because there was no considerable journal in Ireland at the time which gave the League more than a spasmodic and half-hearted support. I should certainly be disposed to place the influence of the

*Irish World* higher than that of either meetings or speeches, in Parliament or out of it, in giving the first wild impulse towards the Agrarian Revolution, which has since shattered all the towers and ramparts of Irish Landlordism into the dust. The man who forged the thunders of the *Irish World* was scarcely less remarkable than his paper, and remarkable all the more because his modesty and taciturnity have kept him unknown outside a narrow circle of enthusiastic friends. A small, dingy, silent man, with the careless soft hat, the close-cut beard, and husky voice and deep earnest eyes of the late Joseph Cowen, but without a spark of that orator's wizard gift of speech—for Patrick Forde is probably the only man, who ever exercised any considerable influence over the Irish race, who has never made a public speech and shrinks from the platform as from a public pillory. He is one of those types of solemn, self-immolating, remorseless, yet intensely religious natures to be found more frequently among the revolutionists of Russia than of Ireland; whom you might expect to see either recommended for beatification as a saint or blown up by an infernal machine fired by his own hand, in a cause which for him has the sacredness of a religion. His excesses were those on which England has been willing to turn a not unindulgent eye in the case of a Mazzini or a Stepniak, of an enslaved Italy or an enslaved Russia. The truth is, that any one of half-a-dozen English journals of eminence it would be easy to



name has done more to create blind prejudice and bad blood between the two races than the *Irish World* in its bitterest hour. It will perhaps astonish Englishmen still more to be told that, next to Parnell and Gladstone, they owe to Mr. Patrick Forde more than to any other living man the conversion of an entire Irish-American world of enemies to a spirit of friendliness of which the vote of "the predominant partner" herself alone forbade the consummation.

Mr. Davitt's personality was the most powerful factor in giving the Land League agitation its first grip of the West. It may be doubted, however, whether the movement would ever have attained national proportions, only for the giant figure that arose in the South, to broaden the issue from one that affected the famine-stricken to one that enlisted the interest of every man in the nation, and to rouse the major portion of the Bishops and priests into an ardent participation in the infant agitation, which they had at the outset regarded with suspicion and dislike. On the occasion of the first Land League meeting in Ballyhaunis, even so eminent a popular champion as Archbishop Mac-Hale of Tuam (O'Connell's Lion of the fold of Judah) stigmatised Mr. Davitt and his companions as "a company of unknown strollers." When I travelled through the county of Tipperary, a few months after the first meetings in the West, the Mayo movement had scarcely been even heard of, except through two or three sparse reports of

speeches in back pages of the *Freeman*. I found that the progress of foreign competition in the butter and cattle trades had created as much dismay in the South as the destruction of the potato crop in the West, and my own letters, perhaps, did something to fix men's thoughts upon the common danger, and rally them to a common standard. I spent more than one evening over the Archbishop's cheery fire in Thurles, relating my own experiences in the West, and explaining to him the mighty and mysterious forces that had been unloosed there. But many months were yet to pass before Archbishop Croke's historic "Visitation" of his vast Archdiocese raised the whole southern half of Ireland into a religiously-minded revolution (not altogether unlike his own early experiences of the Paris of '48) at the signal of his resounding voice, and under the shield of his great name.

It was my fortune to accompany him in that famous expedition, which gives a singularly striking illustration of that alliance of religious and national fervour—his enemies would suggest of the Altar and the Revolution—which it was the purpose of Dr. Croke's life to perfect, and of which he was himself the living embodiment. The "Visitation" was the ordinary triennial episcopal journey from parish to parish for the Confirmation of children and the investigation of the state of religion and morals in the parish. Nothing was further from his thoughts, when he set out from his house in

Thurles, than that his journey should turn out to be the most momentous series of political manifestations since the Monster Meetings of O'Connell. I know, with a reporter's certainty, that he had not prepared a line of the ringing speeches which he had to pour out to excited multitudes, sometimes twice and thrice a day, for three weeks. But the country was in the throes of a contest for its life and could hold its peace no longer, and it turned instinctively for the Word to that massy-shouldered, fearless man, who towered aloft even in the midst of men of the towering Tipperary breed, and in whose stout hands the crozier shone with the gleam of a consecrated sword. It was a season of delicious early summer in perhaps the most favoured region of Ireland. In the first country parish he approached, the entire population turned out on the roads, with green boughs and banners, took the horses from the Archbishop's modest carriage, and drew him with loving embrace to the church door, where they showered addresses of welcome at his feet. And there, in his purple-edged soutane and biretta, his voice stirring as the neigh of a war-horse in the battle, his keen blue-grey eye flashing back the people's own enthusiasm and love, he would boldly tell them of their God-given right to the first-fruits of the land they tilled, and of his own readiness to testify, if needs be with his life, to the justice of their cause. And then the wondrous spectacle, only possible in Ireland, was seen of these multitudes, with revolu-



tion in their eyes, frantic with the excitement of the wild Tipperary whoop, all of a sudden falling on their knees with bared heads to receive the blessing of their Archbishop ; and a quarter of an hour afterwards congregated in the church in their religious Confraternities and Sodalities, listening as reverently as the children awaiting Confirmation while the Archbishop delivered his religious exhortations, or perhaps his stern denunciation of some parish scandal, in the extremely rare cases where even his penetrating eye could discover any scandal to be rebuked.

The example spread from parish to parish, until the whole Archdiocese, covering the richest districts of Tipperary and Limerick, was day after day throbbing with mighty demonstrations, and listening to speeches of straightforward courage and fiery logic, which were read the next morning with almost equal excitement in every corner of the country. One of those scenes in particular will always dwell immutably in my memory. It was a heavenly evening in early June on the Rock of Cashel. Behind rose the classic ruins of the Cathedral and Palace of the ancient bishop-kings of Munster. For many a mile in front spread the deep green pastures and cornfields of the Golden Vale (the scene that prompted Cromwell to cry out, "Here's a land worth fighting for!"), until they melted away under the faint blue line of the Galtee Mountains. The air was heavy with the perfume of the hawthorn hedges, and the light of the evening sun over the

beautiful plain and its mountain borders was divine. The Archbishop stood on a height on the face of the Rock, in his violet vesture, surrounded by the priests of Cashel and Emly, whose magnificent physique often led him to boast that Frederick the Great would have coveted them for his regiment of Guards; while at the foot of the Rock wound an unending procession of the strongest men in Ireland, in a cloud of dust through which burst forth their wild shouts, the brazen music of their bands, and the glitter of their banners. It was as if Cormac MacCullinane, King and Prelate of Cashel, had arisen from his warrior grave on the Rock to lead on the hosts of Munster again for the conquest of their glorious province.

When the famous Visitation was over, the Land League was the supreme power in Ireland. Dr. Croke has been blamed with extraordinary severity and even virulence for his part in the Land League Revolution. His speeches were habitually treated by the viler part of the English press as if they were incitements to crime. It is quite certain that Mr. Forster once contemplated his arrest under his Coercion Act. English influences at Rome were exercised for his condemnation with an unscrupulous disregard of truth or justice, and with a degree of success that, but for Dr. Croke's own strength of character, might have eventuated in a conflict of evil omen for all that Irishmen hold most sacred. Even at home there were not wanting estimable

brethren of his own household to question his wisdom, if not to harbour judgments still less charitable. The question may be discussed without passion, by the dry light of experience, so far as there can now be any doubt as to the verdict of history. Every proposition laid down by Dr. Croke on his memorable Visitation, ferociously as these propositions were assailed at the time, has since been transferred from the platform to the Statute-Book, even by an English Legislature. The large number of Englishmen who, in happier years, came to know him among his people and in his own house, lived to be completely captivated by the contagious warm-heartedness, the breezy honesty, the essentially broad and tolerant spirit of the great ecclesiastic, whom English journalists, and especially English Catholic journalists, were accustomed for years to figure to themselves as something akin to a monster in episcopal clothing. He had the happiness, before he died, of receiving the united and truly heartfelt homage of every Prelate of the Irish Church, on the occasion of his Silver Jubilee as a Bishop.<sup>1</sup> Time has proved even to the most

<sup>1</sup> He once exhibited to me, amongst the innumerable gifts of his Jubilee day, a chalice of gold of great value, encrusted with jewels. "Read that inscription carefully. It is unique," he said. "You'll find there the name of every Archbishop and Bishop alive in Ireland to-day. That is the first time, in any matter not *de fide*, that all the Irish Bishops were ever found united in anything, and, please God, it will be the last." Their political differences were indeed wide and open. At the moment when Dr. Croke was making his famous Land League progress through Tipperary, Most Reverend Dr. M'Cabe, Archbishop of Dublin, published a pastoral anathematising



ensorious of them that he had interpreted the deepest emotions of the Irish heart more happily than they. At a moment when it was doubtful whether the Land League would not be dominated by the secret societies, who were beginning to retort the hostility of the priests with interest, and showing many dangerous symptoms of a determination to exclude them from the movement altogether, Dr. Croke's courage in trusting the people, and throwing himself into the forefront of their perils with all the ardour of his big Irish heart, dissolved whatever was dangerous in the secret societies by leading them out into the open daylight ; and not by

the "Ladies' Land League," which was founded by some of the noblest women in Ireland, as a "dishonouring attempt, under the flimsy pretext of charity, to lay aside the modesty of the daughters of Ireland," and calling upon his priests "not to tolerate in your Sodalities the woman who so far disavows the birthright of modesty as to parade herself before the public gaze in a character so unworthy a child of Mary." It would be grossly to misread the character of Dr. Croke, however, to suppose that his playful hits at the political weaknesses of some of his episcopal brethren covered any real bitterness, much less any fundamental difference on the deeper concerns of religion. Even when the politics of Dublin and Cashel were as far apart as the poles, he spoke with reverence of Dr. M'Cabe's priestly character, and was one of his most intimate friends. He and the Most Reverend Dr. O'Dwyer, Bishop of Limerick, also had the liveliest personal regard for one another, throughout a period when each entertained a very unflattering impression indeed of the other's political friends ; nor did Dr. Croke lack staunch political as well as personal allies among the Irish Bishops, the most conspicuous of whom were Dr. Duggan, Bishop of Clonfert (of whom I shall have occasion to speak again)—a man with all the celestial unselfishness of the Bishop in Victor Hugo's *Misérables* and, at the same time, the brain and the fearlessness of a great reformer ; and Dr. Nulty, Bishop of Meath, who was probably the first representative on the Episcopal Bench of the modern Christian Democrat.

any methods of spiritual intimidation or intrigue, but by force of their complete identification with their people's hopes and interests here and hereafter, restored to the Irish priesthood a position of respect and power which was the envy of every other Catholic land in Christendom. The split of 1890, in which the Irish Episcopacy and Parnell were locked in a mortal conflict, bitter as was the anguish it brought to Dr. Croke personally, was the crowning vindication of his wisdom, both as a Churchman and as an Irishman. If that great convulsion strained to the very snapping-point the influence of the Irish hierarchy, it was largely through the suspicion that many of the bishops and priests, who had conformed to Dr. Croke's policy of identification with the National movement, were only waiting for the opportunity of tripping Parnell up and shaking off the yoke which Dr. Croke had imposed upon them. If the side the Irish Bishops took proved to be the victorious one, it was mainly because Dr. Croke and those of his school, who had shared the people's struggles and sufferings, were seen to be on that side, and were known to be impelled by their stern duty as Irish Nationalists, in a moment of awful crisis for the country, as well as by their assent in the moral order to the pronouncement of the Bishops.

It was one of Dr. Croke's innocent foibles to love to be thought *rusé*. He was sometimes taken at his word, even by the less acute of his own order,

to whom his free-spoken championship of revolutionary men and doctrines was a stumbling-block.<sup>1</sup> In reality, he was one of the most simple and straightforward of men. The key to his character was that he was as truly an Irish Nationalist as he was a Roman ecclesiastic, and could no more understand why there should be any question of antagonism or separation between the two characters than between the brain and heart in his own living body. A long residence in free countries—first in the French Republic and afterwards among the bold democracy of New Zealand—had led him to entertain a confidence in popular liberty which terrified timid souls, and to laugh at those fears for the safety of the Faith which made them uneasy at every breath of free discussion.

“I was charmed,” he said, in one of his Visitation speeches at Emly, “to see how beautifully and suggestively you had blended Ireland’s beloved standard of green, which has never been sullied, with the Cross that can never know defeat. I desire to repeat to-day that, notwithstanding the cry now so frequently, and, as I think, so needlessly raised, of the Church in danger, I am now

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<sup>1</sup> He used to tell against himself, with a zest which was apt to scandalise the weaker brethren, a remark he overheard at the Thurles Railway Station when seeing off Monsignor Persico, who had come on a most delicate mission from the Vatican, and between whom and the Archbishop of Cashel there was supposed to have been an encounter of deeply Machiavelian, though courteous diplomacy. “Look at the pair as sweet as two doves,” whispered a bystander; “I wonder which is the greater rogue of the two?” Events indeed have proved that poor Monsignor Persico no more deserved the compliment than his true-hearted Irish host.



as ever, and now more than ever, a firm and unwavering believer in the lasting fidelity of our people to the dual cause of creed and country, being, indeed, thoroughly convinced that, should the people ever swerve from their allegiance to either or both, the sad event will be caused by the weakening of that bond of love which has united and still continues to unite the Irish priest to his Irish flock."

The last public speech of his life—that in which he returned thanks to the host of bishops, priests, and laymen who came to celebrate his Episcopal Jubilee<sup>1</sup>—deserves to live as the abridged history of his life :—

For once in my life, my lords and gentlemen, I cannot avoid being egotistical. I have never broken with a friend nor turned my back upon an enemy ; and if, at times, though rarely, I had to draw the sword and smite a clerical or lay transgressor, it was, I think, universally understood that in doing so I felt more pain myself than I inflicted on the offender. . . . A pledged Independent of over forty years' standing, I have never courted the smiles of the great nor sought a favour from the Government. In religious matters I have never questioned the conscientious convictions of any man, nor his absolute right to hold his own. Brought up, though not bred, for the most part among free peoples, I imbibed the love of liberty from my earliest years, and have ever been, in heart and act, I own, a rebel against every species of tyranny, and thoroughly in sympathy with the poor, the afflicted, and the oppressed. Such being my natural tendencies, it was to be expected that when occasion offered I should take sides with the down-

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<sup>1</sup> Thurles, July 18th, 1895.

trodden tenants of Ireland, and strive, as far as any one man could do it, to loose the landlord's grip on their throats, and secure for them the right to live and thrive in their own land. I joined the National Party at once, accordingly, in '79, having first convinced myself that the cause they advocated was a just and righteous one, and that the men who headed the movement were made of the proper mettle. This brought down on me the maledictions of not a few, but the blessings of many, and if I suffered as I did in consequence, and had to pay the penalty in various ways of my advanced views and determined action as an Irish Nationalist, I have at all times been rewarded a hundredfold by the affectionate regards of the people and the steady support of the great majority of the Irish priests and bishops.

I have re-read all the speeches delivered by the Archbishop during his famous three weeks' Apostolate. There can be no higher tribute to the foresight and real moderation of his doctrines than the fact that, of all those improvised declarations, delivered at unexpected moments, under every circumstance of excitement and temptation to be extreme, I have not come across a sentence which, by the light of what has occurred since, any friend of his would desire to see obliterated. The speeches, which were treated by the English Press as if they were the ravings of some Jacobinical Conventionnel *en mission*, were, in fact, only startling because they were elementary truths for the first time courageously spoken from a high place. His claims for the Irish tenants were even more modest than those which both English Parties have since

in turn conceded. He was considerate, and even sympathetic, for the inevitable losses of the landlords. He insisted upon the honest payment of fair rents, he set his face against extravagant demands, he preached horror of crime and of the criminal, with the determination of one who was no more to be cowed by an angry popular shout than by Mr. Forster's Warrant of Arrest.

To read these speeches now, when they seem only the picturesque summary of all that the Statute-Book has been saying since, and then to read the terms of perfectly crazy calumny in which they were dealt with at the time in the English Press, and by England's emissaries in Rome, is to learn an amazing lesson as to the power of misrepresentation to breed enmity between peoples who will one another no wrong. One illustration will perhaps suffice to point the moral. One of the Archbishop's phrases, "You cannot have an omelette without breaking eggs," was caught up by the *Times* and by all the minor landlord Press in chorus, as though it were a stealthy incitement to murder, addressed by an ecclesiastical monster to an audience of assassins. Here is the passage<sup>1</sup> which gave rise to the calumny, and which, of course, was not presented to the English eyes which read the gloss upon it :—

After explaining the provisions of Gladstone's Land Act, "which," he did not hesitate to say, "far

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Croke at Thurles, Oct. 9th, 1881.



surpasses in the breadth and variety, as well as in the value, of its provisions any measure previously passed into law for Ireland by the British Parliament," Dr. Croke urged that all would depend upon its administration :—

The man who labours on the soil, be he farmer or agricultural labourer, has the first claim upon its fruits. The Commissioners under the Land Act would do well to bear this fact in mind, and so to reduce rents all over the country as to enable the tiller of the soil to be wholesomely fed, fairly clothed, and suitably housed, besides making all other needful provisions for himself and his family. Whatever remains after that is a fair rent. It belongs to the owner of the soil, and the man who withholds it from him does a patent wrong, and is guilty of a great injustice. This is the settlement of the Land question which Charles Stewart Parnell and the Land League are labouring to procure, and this is the only settlement that will be deemed perfect and satisfactory by the patriotic priests and Bishops of Ireland. Entertaining as I do the kindest feeling towards every class of our countrymen, and not wishing to see one section of society benefited at the expense of another, I cannot conceal from myself that such a settlement of the Land question as I have now sketched would entail a very serious loss to every landlord, even the best in Ireland, while it will be utterly ruinous to some of them. But this, I regret to say, cannot be helped. No victory has ever been achieved on the field of battle without the loss of some valuable lives. You cannot make omelettes, as the French say, without breaking eggs, nor can millions be emancipated without the humiliation of a few. Now it is plainly within the power of the Land Commissioners to effect some settlement such as this. Will they rise to the level of this great cause? Will they have the courage

of aiming a death-blow at the ascendancy of a few, in order to secure the birthright and the much-needed elevation of the multitude? Or will they attempt to plaster up the sores of the people instead of radically healing them?

Here was a statesmanlike view of a difficult situation—a view which all parties now confess to be the true one—set forth also with a regretful and even sympathetic consideration for those whose incomes were bound to suffer through the operation of an inexorable law. What is to be thought of the fair-play of those who, for many years afterwards, in the columns of the Coercionist Press and in the Parnell Commission Court and in the corridors of the Vatican, quoted the Archbishop's "you cannot make omelettes without breaking eggs," carefully suppressing the fact that it was the Land Commissioners who in his view would have to break them, as a sly instigation to murder, addressed to a criminal population?

On another occasion His Grace received a cutting from a Roman journal under English influence, which contained the following paragraph under a scare-heading:—

#### INSURRECTION IN IRELAND

Intelligence has been received of a serious outbreak in the county of Limerick. The insurgents occupy in force a stronghold known as Quinlan's Castle. General Lord Clarina has been despatched to sit down before it with an army corps. A desperate resistance is threatened.

It was enclosed in a despatch from the Secretary

of State, saying—"The Holy Father desires to be informed without delay, if it be true that the rebellion referred to herein has broken out in Your Grace's Archdiocese."

The rebellion story was, of course, as grotesque a legend as that of the omelette. One of Mr. Forster's most comical follies as Chief Secretary was to dispatch a battalion of the Coldstream Guards, by way of "striking terror," to the scene of some evictions near Oola in the county of Limerick. In the backyard of one of the farmhouses to be evicted stood the ruins of an ancient Castle, roofless and dismantled since the days of Cromwell. Some practical joker got it into Mr. Forster's head that the Castle was really a formidable affair, and that a considerable garrison was assembled there to resist the Sheriff. I happened myself to be present at the excruciating scene, when the Coldstream Guards of England were drawn out to storm the unfortunate ruins. It was one of the most solemn practical jokes in history. The battalion of giants, with shotted guns, approached the fortress in open order, and then, with a rush and a cheer, poured through the gaping breaches in the walls. The feat was received with an Homeric roar of laughter from the assembled crowd, who were in the secret. The crestfallen Guards found themselves in an empty ruin, under the open sky, without a living thing to encounter them except some jackdaws they disturbed in the ivy. The one practical result of



the expedition was that Tim Quinlan, the poor tenant, who never before thought of describing his humble home as "Quinlan's Castle," ever afterwards bore that proud description as his address. And it was this absurd rustic joke—the sorest humiliation, perhaps, in the history of the Guards of England—that enabled the whisperers in the alcoves of the Vatican to exhibit the Archbishop of Cashel as an insurgent chief to an alarmed Propaganda.

The best testimony to Dr. Croke's teaching and to its fruits is that, throughout all the years of the Land League struggle, Tipperary, which in all previous cycles of disturbance in Ireland had held the foremost place for agrarian murders and affrays, was not stained by a single deed of blood and was wholly free from moonlighting conspiracies or other secret societies; while Dublin, whose Cardinal Archbishop had distinguished himself by hostility to the open constitutional movement, was the scene of the Invincible Conspiracy, and of various assassinations, or attempted assassinations, only less sensational than the murders of the Chief Secretary and Under Secretary in the Phoenix Park. It is also worthy of remark that, with the exception of one small corner, practically the entire Archdiocese of Cashel and Emly followed Archbishop Croke in the great split of 1890, while Dublin was the centre and focus of the resistance to the Bishops.

## CHAPTER XIII

### 'UNITED IRELAND'

1881

"THE Law of the League" was now, to all intents and purposes, "the Law of the Land." Once Gladstone realised the gravity of the Irish crisis, he framed a Land Bill, inadequate, indeed, to its purpose, but still so daring in its proposals as to revolutionise completely the law as to the ownership of the land of Ireland. If the Act of 1881 did not realise in its fulness the programme of the League, at least it rendered the fulfilment of that programme the only ultimate solution of the problem. The Bill swept away the landlords' three darling feudal privileges of arbitrary eviction, of raising their rents as they pleased, and of forbidding the sale of the tenants' occupancy interest. It raised the Irish tenant from a tenure more precarious than that of any peasantry in Europe to an acknowledged legal partnership with the landlord in the ownership of his fields; and it reduced the landlords, from a power as unbridled as that of a Turkish Pasha 'over his

slaves, to the position of annuitants, entitled to what was decreed by a court of equity to be a fair rent, and to scarcely any other vestige of their former sovereign privileges. If Gladstone and Parnell had only at that time arrived at the mutual understanding which came a few years afterwards, so that the administration of the Act might be committed to courageous hands, and the tremendous authority of the League devoted to facilitating its smooth working, the measure might have saved the two countries fifteen years of more or less accentuated civil war, and brought the landlords to hail the abolition of dual ownership on fair terms as a welcome deliverance, as well as taken the sting out of all the arguments that overthrew the Home Rule Settlement of 1886.

On neither side, however, was so sane a conception of statesmanship yet possible. Mr. Forster went to Dublin Castle with the most fatal of all English delusions, that upright intentions alone suffice for the good government of Ireland by a stranger. He apparently came to the obstinate belief that Gladstone's great measure of emancipation for the tenants must, in stern impartiality, be accompanied by a Coercion Act, which was to strip a heroic act of justice of all its grace and raise up a thousand bitter enemies in its path. A better-informed man would have known that the crimes which the landlord Press and their allies in the offices of Dublin Castle kept bawling in his ears



were in vastly smaller numbers than those recorded in any former period of Famine and Eviction of the like intensity, and, far from being attributable to the machinations of the League, occurred mostly in districts to which the League had not yet extended the protection of its organisation, or where its authority was weakest. Mr. Forster, on the contrary, allowed himself to be persuaded that the crimes were sufficiently accounted for by the speeches of three or four half-witted village orators who sometimes clambered on the platform when a Land League meeting was dispersing, and whose words of gold (received with amusement and derision by the crowd) were caught up by the universal English Press as the only thing worth recording concerning these vast popular manifestations. A more profound statesman would have recognised that Parnell and his associates spoke for a whole people in travail, and would have listened to them with respectful attention. Nothing would shake Mr. Forster in the conviction that they spoke only for "a gang of broken men and reckless boys," and that the mass of the Irish people would hail him as a deliverer if he ridded them of their leaders. A less self-righteous man would have frankly acknowledged that it was the League and its leaders who had roused Gladstone even to the knowledge that there was an Irish crisis to be faced. To Mr. Forster it seemed the summit of Spartan virtue to recommend the Land Act to the Irish people by

maligning and trampling down the men to whom all the world knew they really owed it.

The House of Lords had indeed helped him on the road to ruin by throwing out the Compensation for Disturbance Bill in 1880. It may be doubted whether the acceptance of a measure which put so very imperfect a check upon evictions could have conjured down the storm in Ireland, but its rejection by a majority of even the Liberal Peers was a direct provocation to civil war, as well as a justification of those who took up the challenge. Had Mr. Forster boldly thrown the responsibility on the right shoulders, and declined to dragoon Ireland, while the Government was excogitating the great measure of justice of the following spring, eviction might have been more effectively discouraged than it could have been by the Compensation for Disturbance Bill, and the country would have been quieted with the prospect of assured redress. What he really did was to encourage the evictors, and enrage the sorely-suffering people, by a system of coercion too feeble to overawe a desperate population, but sufficiently venomous to prejudice them against the Land Bill that was to follow it. First a prosecution for conspiracy under a rusty mediæval statute, and a hopelessly impracticable method of striking a jury panel, was launched against Parnell and his principal colleagues in the same court of Queen's Bench in which the previous generation of Governmental blunderers had arraigned O'Connell.

From the time the jury was sworn, the traversers lost all interest in a result which was foreseen by every urchin in the streets of Dublin, but they turned the folly of the Castle to account by converting the Court of Queen's Bench into a Land League meeting in permanent session, startling Dublin with the sight of an army of evicted and hunger-stricken tenants assembling like spectres to testify to the crimes of Landlordism. They stirred the country to subscribe an enormous Indemnity Fund for the exposure; they hired a couple of dozen of the most accomplished orators of the Irish Bar to repeat and improve upon the fiercest diatribes of the Land League demonstrations;<sup>1</sup> and in the end so completely cowed the Crown Counsel, that for some days they were in considerable trepidation lest the jury should finish not by the disagreement which was all along taken for granted, but by a death-sentence upon Landlordism *sans phrase*. The popular merriment at the collapse of the prosecution in the Queen's Bench was changed into indignation by Mr. Forster's next stroke—the spiriting away of Mr. Davitt into penal servitude. Blunderheadedness could not well have hit upon a more effective device for inflaming every

<sup>1</sup> By a coincidence not unusual in the venal history of the Irish Bar, some of the most eminent of the advocates hired by the League to praise the traversers were subsequently hired by the Crown to prosecute them. One of the most lurid and dithyrambic pleas for the Land League was delivered by Mr. Peter O'Brien, who afterwards earned the titles of Lord O'Brien of Kilfenora and Lord Chief Justice of Ireland, as well as the, perhaps, more enduring one of "Pether the Packer" on the Crown side of the same Court.



generous instinct of the country, and exciting Irish suspicion of any legislative gifts from the same unchivalrous hands.

For a country thus harried by the landlords, filled with contempt for the coercionists' failure, and angered by their foul procedure against a beloved leader, the Session of 1881, which under happier stars might have been hailed as the harbinger of a blessed Land Reform, opened with a fresh Coercion Bill, which combined the maximum of outrage upon the Constitution with an inefficiency which was to cover its authors with more hatred and contempt than even their fiasco in the Queen's Bench or their unlucky device for silencing Mr. Davitt. We now know from Mr. Morley<sup>1</sup> that, to Gladstone's "dismay," Mr. Bright and Mr. Chamberlain were with Mr. Forster for the Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, and that if Gladstone had not "submitted," the only alternative would have been his resignation and the break-up of the Ministry. The catastrophe could only have been avoided if Parnell had been treated not as a "village ruffian," but as the leader who held the enmity or good-will of Ireland in his gift as never Irish leader held it before. But the time was not yet. The excellent intentions of the most powerful group of Englishmen of the day were rendered null and void by the inborn national incapacity for governing Ireland, or even understanding her. The Session which was to conciliate

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Gladstone*, vol. iii. p. 50.

Ireland began with a Bill to suspend her rudimentary liberties and a Parliamentary *coup d'état* to stifle the protests of her representatives. When, after the famous forty-one hours' sitting, Mr. Speaker Brand summarily ordered Mr. Biggar to sit down, and by brute force put an end to the resistance of the thirty-two Irish members, it was a famous victory for an exultant Coercionist Press ; but it sealed the fate of the Land Bill as a peace-offering, and roused every corpuscle of the hot Irish blood to answer Revolution in Parliament by a social Revolution, which neither guns nor ships availed to conquer. The bitterness of feeling in Ireland was aggravated by the fact that Mr. Shaw's section of the Irish members deserted their comrades in their resistance to the Coercion Bill, and the *Freeman* hung on Parnell's flank as usual, with dubious attitude, in every moment of difficulty. The cup overflowed when the Coercion Bill became law, and almost the first men whom Mr. Forster "reasonably suspected" and threw into jail as "village ruffians" were Mr. John Dillon, who was, in the eyes of his countrymen, the pattern of a high-souled gentleman, and Father Sheehy, one of the most beloved priests in Ireland.

This was the state of affairs when the following entry—the last that was to be made for many an eventful year—appeared in my diary :—

*July 3rd.*—An extraordinary letter from Parnell. They have purchased *The Irishman* concern, and he begs of me to take the editing and general management on my

own terms! By the same post, letters from Pat Egan, James O'Kelly, and T. P. O'Connor, pressing me to accept. A few hours later, a wire from Egan, from Paris, "Your answer to our proposal must be Yes!" So it is a concerted affair.

I A.M. Home, after pacing the street for near three hours with M'Weeney. Summons has been humming through my brain all the day. Sounds a little like a death-bell. National journalism in such an upheaval of earth and hell as is coming can only end in one way—as it always does end in Ireland. The more I turn it over, there is no resisting. In such a time, with beliefs like mine, not to suffer one's share would be shame. Poor mother looked so sad. "Was not our poor Jim enough?" she said, and broke down crying. But she rallied bravely—so bravely. "My heart, whatever you think best will be the right thing. May God direct you!" Queerly enough, M'W., who is one of the least credulous of politicians, and will miss me as he would a son, is clear for acceptance. What is there to forbid? A life of ease and perfect content, so far as my surroundings go; more money than I have any use for; friends galore, if I would seek them, or if I would only not shun them; a creepy horror of the mean tragedies and scurrilities of Irish public life! *Contrà*, the rebel blood within me; health so bad that prison or Pandemonium can make it no worse; the ill-luck of Endymion in love; a lonely home from which the last dear figure is fading away at an awful rate; nothing whatever to live for, and a sense of the sorrow of life (and above all of Irish life) so oppressive, that even a forlorn hope for our old race, and under the right man, seems bliss. M'W. would go on repeating, "You have it in you; give yourself a chance." Did he mean ambition? If he did, never a woeful mistake. I have no more ambition than an earthworm.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The only political ambition of which I was ever conscious was once when re-reading Wordsworth's lines on Wallace:



Was he thinking of ability? I have some of a sort, more or less hebetated by disease and languor of body and soul. If I only could be always what I can be sometimes, I might serve for something in a poor country that has not too much to choose from. . . . There is nothing I am quite sure of except that I have a life to risk, and that may be something, as things are shaping. My real hesitations are two—first, a physical repulsion for the Pigott concern as for an ugly disease; second, and more particularly, how to break the news to E. D. G., who, whatever may be his political waverings, has been a brother to me, and more. He is sure to suspect (rightly) in the new paper a rival, or at least a menace. Policeman has knocked to say I had left the latchkey in the key-hole. Will he be calling soon on other business? The thought gives me a little shiver. He must have seen the Chief and myself tramping up and down for hours. I verily believe he took us for house-breakers! To bed! Wonder has P.'s summons murdered sleep?

*Quel giorno non più vi leggemmo avanti!* With the above entry, like the lovers in the Divine Epic after the fated kiss, I shut the book. For fourteen years after, I never committed my thoughts to paper again, throughout an epoch when, perhaps, they

How Wallace fought for Scotland, left the name  
Of Wallace to be found, like a wild-flower,  
All over his dear country.

"The wild-flower of his native land" seemed so much more enviable a form of immortality than a tomb in Westminster Abbey. But that daring thought was many years afterwards, and was only a moment's folly. When the above was written I certainly ran the earthworm close in his ambition for hiding himself in the earth. Of literary ambition—of a certain hot flush of faith that I could do something with my pen to give Irish life and the Irish cause a grip on human sympathy—I had my fill. But that ambition, and how I was cured of it, is "another story"—is in itself, indeed, a story of Irish life as sad as any.

might have been of more public value, barring a few memoranda jotted down during the Home Rule negotiations of 1886, and again at the opening of the Home Rule Parliament of 1892.

I had not been consulted at all as to the purchase of the Pigott establishment. Messrs. Parnell and Egan had agreed to buy Mr. Richard Pigott's goodwill, or rather, to buy off his ill-will, for a sum of £3000. Except on the basis of a blackmailing transaction, the price was a ridiculous one. The concern was not commercially worth three thousand farthings. The circulation of the twopenny paper, *The Irishman*, was sinking week by week to zero, and that of the penny paper, the *Flag of Ireland*, had practically disappeared. Pigott had been keeping the establishment going by methods worthy of his subsequent performances of Parnell Commission fame. It was suspected that the Secret Service Fund was at the bottom of his attacks on the Land League from the high-souled Fenian point of view. If the suspicion is unjust, it can only have been unjust to those entrusted with the distribution of the fund. The first visit I paid to the office in Lower Abbey Street, damp, mouldy, and dilapidated, with bankruptcy written up everywhere, and a pervading atmosphere of unwholesomeness, was made with the shuddering sensation of going to dwell in a sepulchre. The poor skeletons left of the staff, indeed, seemed to suggest, almost as eloquently as the figures of the agents' books, and the moist and decaying furniture,

that it would take another miracle of Lazarus to raise the concern from the dead. The one ray of hope to be seen anywhere was the foreman printer and General Providence, Mr. Edward Donnelly. In the midst of a moral and pecuniary leprosy, he preserved qualities of honesty and fidelity as incorruptible as the purity of the Lady amidst the rabble-rout of *Comus*. For several years he had managed to keep the sinking ship afloat by all sorts of ingenious shifts and economies, and by pledging his own modest savings from bank to bank. Mr. Donnelly, for whom the new regime with all its perils was heaven, continued to the day of his death to be one of my most valued helpers and friends. But even his face received me with a thousand plain signals that I was venturing into the region of the lost.

The blackmail paid by Parnell was not, however, without its compensations. It deprived the black-mailer of all access to the old Fenian public, less numerous, perhaps, than worthy of respect, who suspected nothing of Pigott's villainy, but still had their own suspicions of Parliamentary methods, and their clinging to the old dreams to which they gave their hearts, and would gladly have given their blood. The £3000 paid to Pigott, moreover, represented the only sum which the new project drew from the League Funds. During the three following years, when the new paper practically bore upon its shoulders the whole brunt of the battle against Earl Spencer's



resolute Coercion regime, and against an unparalleled series of prosecutions and actions for damages by his surbordinate officials, the going expenses were covered by a bank overdraft on Parnell's credit, and the tremendous success which afterwards, with the triumph of Home Rule and Earl Spencer's courageous conversion, attended the paper, enabled us not only to pay off the overdraft, but to return to Parnell payments which had already far exceeded the amount paid to Pigott, when the crash of 1890 brought *United Ireland* and all else beside it to red ruin. The £3000 paid for the establishment of the new paper was thus, beyond all comparison, the most fruitful expenditure to which the funds of the Land League were ever applied.

These vast results, however, were little to be foreseen on my first visit to the shipwrecked and leprosy-stricken establishment of which I was asked to take the helm. But even poor Donnelly's face of despair did not frighten me from the plain duty of the hour, if, indeed, it did not actually inspire me with the subtle charm of a daring deed. The fear of a misunderstanding with Gray, or of finding myself committed to a war upon his newspaper, was still my principal difficulty, and so I wrote to Parnell. He replied saying he quite appreciated and honoured my disinclination to part with Gray, but again in moving terms urged me to undertake the duty. "By doing so," he was good enough to write, "you will undoubtedly confer a very great

benefit upon the National cause, and a personal favour on me." I wrote to Gray, frankly explaining the situation, and saying, I need not tell him it was not a question of money that could induce me "to throw up a position of perfect safety and comfort to myself, and a connection that, so far as I am concerned, has been from beginning to end one of pleasure and affection, to launch out into the adventures that may be now before me. For good or ill, as you know, I am a bit of an extremist, and I am sure nobody will feel more readily than yourself that this is a time when a man with my opinions feels a little ashamed not to be taking his part in whatever troubles may be going." Gray took the announcement with characteristic kindness, and relieved me of all anxiety as to our future good relations.

My mind was made up, and all my arrangements made for taking up my new post of duty, when, to my consternation, I learned that "the Kilmainham Party," as the Land League leaders then confined in Kilmainham Jail came to be called, were opposed tooth and nail to the newspaper project of Messrs. Parnell and Egan, and chief among them the man who had roused my admiration for his captivating and romantic character to a degree only second to my enthusiasm for Parnell himself. I was quite unprepared for the discovery. Recollections of the feuds between the Old Irelanders and the Young Irelanders—between the Young Irelanders and the Younger Irelanders—between the "Stephens' Wing"

and the "Senate Wing" of the Fenian Brotherhood, rushed back upon me, and in place of the one recompense that seemed possible, namely, the sense of battling for a fine ideal by the side of chivalrous comrades, I saw myself giving up ease and ambitionless peace of mind to become a partisan in Heaven knew what obscure quarrel between rival sections. I wrote to Mr. Dillon without a day's delay, to say the news of his hostility to the new project had come upon me like a thunderclap, and that if I was truly informed as to his feeling, I would at once recall my promise to take charge of the projected paper. His reply relieved me of any apprehension of being a stumbling-block myself, but left me full of uneasiness as to the relations between Parnell and his most conspicuous lieutenant.

"I cannot tell you," he wrote from Kilmainham on July 12th, "how much I feel at being impelled by circumstances to be the means of putting you in a very unpleasant position. . . . I have always opposed the project of starting a paper when it was discussed at the Executive, for reasons which I won't now enter into, but which might have been got over, and your accepting the Editorship would have met many of them. But a new difficulty has arisen within the last two months, of a much more serious character—certain members of the L.L. Executive and myself on the one hand, and Parnell and the Parliamentary section of the Executive on the other—as to the policy which should be pursued. During the progress of the Land Bill through Committee, this difference has become daily wider. I am not quite clear as to what course I



shall take when I am set at liberty. But I am quite clear that I cannot allow the people to suppose that I regard the course adopted by the Parliamentary Party towards the Land Bill as satisfactory. You will see, then, that it is quite impossible for me just now to allow my name to be identified with a newspaper which must of necessity put the best face on Parnell's action. In fact, I cannot take any steps in politics at present. I cannot as yet make up my mind what course I will take when I get out. The only point I am quite clear on is that I will not do anything which might be interpreted as consent to the policy which has been pursued either in London or Dublin for the last month. . . . You will understand that I do not by any means wish to influence you not to go on with the paper. I shall not oppose the paper. It is not unlikely that I shall retire from politics. And if the paper is to go on, I would rather see you Editor than any other man I know."

Nothing could be more reassuring as a mark of personal confidence; and it is clear enough to me now that, in his opposition to the starting of *United Ireland*, as well as, in after years, to the starting of the United Irish League, and to the abolition of Landlordism by means of a friendly compact with the landlords, Mr. Dillon was simply influenced by that lack of imaginative insight which is the principal element of greatness wanting in his character, and which led him habitually to view any new line of action, in the constantly shifting circumstances of the Irish movement, with a suspiciousness, an indecision, a certain revolutionary Toryism of mind, which fails to perceive that "old methods" cannot always continue to be the most effective ones. The

defect has always been redeemed in the long run by his essential good sense, in presence of accomplished facts. After his three years' retirement from public life in the depressing times that followed the suppression of the Land League, he returned to Ireland in 1885 full of respect for the success of Parnell's policy. It was the same readiness to accept the inevitable which enabled him long afterwards to overcome his first hostility to the United Irish League, so far as to become the principal personage in its management; and which will, possibly, in due course, induce him to regard with very different feelings the great Land Settlement of 1903, to which he unhappily felt bound to offer an implacable resistance.

I did not at the time understand, if I fully understand even now, the peculiar attitude of the "Kilmainham Party" towards Gladstone's Land Bill; but one thing admitted of no doubt—I was not going to take sides in any intestine quarrel; I was not going to use my pen in writing down any section of Nationalists, least of all, any whose offence might be that they were too "extreme." I so intimated to Parnell in a letter carefully avoiding any reference to the Kilmainham communication, but avowing my amazement to hear that the new enterprise was not to be one of a united Executive. In his reply, dated from the House of Commons on July 15th, he expressed his regret that he could not at the moment cross to Ireland to discuss the

matter more freely with all concerned, as it was of importance he should remain in London until the Bill was through the House of Commons. "But," he added, "I think the feeling you allude to would not be a persistent one, if the newspaper were managed on straightforward and advanced lines. It will, of course, always be my duty to conciliate all sections of opinion comprised in the movement, and to see that everything connected with it is conducted in such a way as to leave no room for complaint of backwardness by any one." He pencilled in his own handwriting this postscript: "*P.S.*—I am quite convinced that the attitude taken by some of our friends as regards *The Irishman* project is based upon insufficient information or misapprehension, and would not last, and that the paper would have the entire support of the Land League." As if he felt that even these assurances might not prove conclusive, he telegraphed on the same night pressing me to go to London; and there, an evening or two afterwards, in that kind of *tête-à-tête* in which the gravity of his epistolary style was exchanged for the sweetly cordial freedom he reserved for those who were once for all admitted to his intimacy, he dispelled all anxiety as to the object with which the paper was to be founded, and as to my own unrestrained liberty in managing it. "You know," I said, "that if the object is to preach moderation, or to save the paper from the Castle, I am the last man to be placed at the helm." "My dear O'Brien,"



was the smiling reply, "you are to go as far as ever you please, short of getting yourself hanged—or us, you know," he added, with a sly allusion to the responsibility of himself, Mr. Biggar, and Mr. Egan as Directors.<sup>1</sup> But this lighter tone was taken only after we had been for hours discussing his difficulties in conciliating conflicting views as to the Land Bill, and the still greater difficulties that were awaiting him when the Act should come into force. It was so long a sitting that after the theatre-parties who had been dining at Romano's Restaurant in the Strand came back to supper-parties, we were still over our coffee and Parnell toying with his cigarette.

This house, which was much affected by theatrical *artistes*, and famed for strange Italian viands and wines, was, for some inexplicable reason, a favourite resort of the lonely Irish leader, who knew no theatrical people and cared for no dainties more *recherché* than a Bordeaux pigeon and a glass of Rhine wine. And it was characteristic of the man that, although he would give no fresh order, and would occupy a table until after the last supper-party had quitted the place, I never knew the waiter who would not hang upon his lightest word, or order, more obsequiously than upon the prodigal customers who supped off oysters and champagne.

There were three, if not four currents of Irish

<sup>1</sup> As prosecutions and actions for libel thickened, Parnell and the others wisely withdrew from their nominal Directorship. The entire responsibility was thenceforward my own.

opinion as to the Land Bill, with none of which Parnell was altogether in agreement, and which nothing short of his own strong retaining power could have led to converge towards the same channel.

There was the war-party, who saw in the Bill a cunning English device for perpetuating the hateful system of Landlordism, which the Land League set out to extirpate, root and branch. To these men, flushed with the prodigious success of the League as a tumultuary movement, and filled with contempt for the feeble malice of Forster's Coercion campaign, it seemed all but a treason to the people's organisation, and to their imprisoned leaders, that Parliamentarians in London should hold any parley with a Bill which, in their eyes, was designed with no better object than to cut the locks of the young Revolutionary Samson. The opportunities of the Kilmainham Section of the Executive for comparing views together daily, and the inevitable irritation with which fighting men from behind prison bars regarded the interminable debates and small strategy of the Parliamentary lobbies, gradually created a state of feeling in which any reference to "the Parliamentary Party" or its doings was sure to be one of reproach.

A section of the Young Parliamentary lions, of whom Mr. Healy was the most aggressive, repaid the contempt of the Kilmainham brethren for Parliamentary methods by a no less extravagant depreciation of extra-Parliamentary warfare, and of "the picturesque patriots" with which his caustic tongue

identified it. Mr. Healy's own mastery of the Bill, and the perfectly voluptuous delight with which he revelled in its details, had so far deadened him to all broader considerations of National policy that his scorn for its opponents knew no bounds. In fact, after his leader and the majority of his colleagues had resolved to withdraw from the debates and throw the entire responsibility for the Bill upon the Government, the wilful young rebel went on to the end voting, amending, and debating with an ingenuity and a coruscating wit that won the lifelong admiration of Gladstone, but even at this early hour suggested uneasy forebodings to his colleagues.

But Mr. Healy's attitude towards the Bill was still that of a critic and a combatant; there was a third section of the Irish members—the moderadoes, under the nominal leadership of Mr. Shaw, whose action in crossing over to the Government benches was regarded in Ireland as desertion to the enemy in the midst of a battle, and whose posture was that of unquestioning worshippers of Gladstone and his Bill. These men, to whom Gladstone himself in a moment of aberration gave the fatal description of the "Nominal Home Rulers,"<sup>1</sup> were all but as

<sup>1</sup> The nickname damned the Shawites in Ireland but was not an altogether just one. Some of them were place-beggars; but the attitude of the majority of them was the perfectly honest, though feeble one of men of an older time who could scarcely believe their eyes and ears as to the revolutionary character of the concessions made by the Bill, and could listen to no argument as to its drawbacks in their enthusiasm for its author. It was the case, so frequent in our history and so ill appreciated in England, where the warm-hearted-



impatient of Mr. Healy's criticism as of Parnell's cold abstention. They would have the Bill accepted by the representatives of Ireland in mute wonder and gratitude.

There was still another school, of whom Archbishop Croke was the most potent spokesman, who did not forget that by Gladstone's admission the Bill was due not to any foresight of his own, much less of his Party or nation, but to the semi-revolutionary uprising in Ireland, and the semi-revolutionary vigour of her representatives in Westminster; who knew that the success or failure of the Act would depend upon the boldness with which the merciless rack-rents arbitrarily piled on by the landlords would be cut down and the tenants' property in their own improvements protected; who had no sympathy either with the servile obeisances of the Nominal Home Rulers or with Mr. Healy's incipient rebellion against his colleagues, but at the same time recog-

ness of the race is vindicated at the expense of its judgment. His colleagues unmercifully tormented one simple-hearted giant (whose son had suffered penal servitude for his part in the Fenian rising and only came out to die) who one night, when Gladstone was being baited by the young Parnellite toreadors, appealingly cried out, "Wisha, don't be too hard upon the poor Government!" It must in justice to Shaw himself be stated, that he had the refusal of a Commissionership under the Act at a salary of £3000 a year, the acceptance of which might have saved him from the fate of a broken-hearted bankrupt, reduced in his last days from the most prominent commercial position in the South of Ireland to scribbling for a crust in an obscure London financial paper. His is not the least tragic figure in the dark gallery of Irish leaders old and new, in whose fate our *mores humaniores* have wrought little change except that the modern Irish leader's heart is broken instead of his neck.

nised that the Bill changed the Irish landlord from being the most irresponsible autocrat on earth into a rent-chargeant, whose annuity was fixed by a public authority, and raised the Irish tenant from a tenure as precarious as that of the landlords' ground game to a joint partnership as secure as the landlords' own. This fourth school recoiled from the danger of sacrificing all in a movement of popular passion, either through resentment against Coercion or through some wild determination to commit the country to a No-Rent Revolution. This was the view which, underneath all the boisterous passion of the platform, was probably the view also of most reflecting Nationalists in Ireland, as it was certainly that of the mass of the Irish tenantry. Even before the Second Reading of the Bill, Dr. Croke wrote a public letter, remonstrating with the Party for their decision, by a vote of 17 to 12, to leave the House in a body and hold aloof from the Division. While yielding to nobody in his admiration of Mr. Dillon or his indignation at his arrest, the Archbishop recalled the consequences to the country of endangering the Bill, even before it could be ascertained how far it might be amended, and put it to the Party "whether, after all, the fact that the Government, by arresting Mr. Dillon, had done a wrong and spiteful thing, was a sufficient reason why the Irish Party in Parliament should do a foolish and even imprudent thing to avenge it."<sup>1</sup> The *Freeman's Journal*,

<sup>1</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, May 7th, 1881.

under the ægis of Dr. Croke's great name, was not slow to complicate the difficulties by adding its own ambiguous counsels.

The patience, tact, and firmness with which Parnell managed to combine all these jarring opinions into a prudent national policy would alone be sufficient to dispose of the absurd legend that he was a *roi fainéant*, who derived his ideas and his fame from lieutenants more capable than he. As a matter of fact, he agreed with much and disagreed with much that the four schools of thinkers were urging, and by a wise eclecticism contrived both to save the Land Act and to enhance the fighting reputation of his party, under circumstances in which no other Irish leader of our time could have prevented it from splitting into fragments. He treated with an even indulgence the impatience of the "Kilmainham Party" and the sharp sallies of Mr. Healy; and while showing a firm front, on one side, to those who reproached him with sacrificing the revolutionary possibilities of the movement, in the spirit of a Parliamentary Opportunist, he did not hesitate, on the other hand, to defend the decision of the Party to cut themselves free from the responsibility for the Bill, in a public reply, in which he reminded even so formidable a monitor as Dr. Croke that "the Convention deliberately left upon us the responsibility of the course to be taken, and I am bound to say that, in my opinion, those who are on the spot and are witnesses of what is going



on day by day can best judge the situation"; adding that while he had taken care to satisfy himself that the Bill ran no danger by reason of the abstention of the Irish Party on the Second Reading Division, "I am bound to urge upon the Party the maintenance of an attitude of observation, and further to take care that the just claims of the country after its arduous struggle, and its many sacrifices, may not be compromised by the too easy acceptance of an imperfect, and in some cases, perhaps, a mischievous, measure."<sup>1</sup>

Parnell said to me that night at Romano's a great many things which the time has not come even yet for setting fully down. They convinced me, at once and for ever, that he was both a more extreme man than the loudest of his lieutenants and a more moderate man than the weaklings who were for ever pining to prostrate themselves at the feet of any fair-spoken Government. He sent me home with a certitude that discontents in either of the extreme sections could not seriously disturb the calculations of such a leader, and that nobody was less likely than he to give up the revolutionary potentialities of the movement, until they had accomplished a radical and

<sup>1</sup> Parnell to Dr. Croke, May 11th, 1881. With a loyalty characteristic of him as a friend and as a Nationalist, the Archbishop wrote a cordial letter in reply, forbearing to press his own view further. "You are," he wrote, "the chosen and trusted leader not alone of the Irish Parliamentary Party, but of the Irish people. I recognise you fully and faithfully as such."

permanent change in the relations between the two countries.

Three weeks afterwards, on August 13th, 1881, appeared the first number of *United Ireland*. A few days earlier, Mr. Dillon had been released from prison in broken health. The House of Lords had read the Land Bill a third time, after a process of mutilation in Committee which no longer left any room for the hope that it would prove a final settlement. The subscriptions to the Land League for the week reached the enormous total of £2759, and turned the people's thoughts more confidently than ever to the resources of their own organisation as a more efficacious means of redress than a mangled English statute. The paper that made its appearance at this critical hour was, from crest to spur, a fighting organ. In a country where thirty-six shopkeepers of Loughrea could be locked up at one swoop, without trial, and even without any specific charge, because some local policeman chose to prick them down as "suspects," the elements of anything like constitutional warfare were thrown to the winds by those whose special function it was to guard them. Whether the new paper would see a second issue depended not upon any squeamish regard for the liberty of the Press, but upon the calculation at the Castle whether to suppress it or to let it alone would be the less likely to play the game of a paper which manifestly set out with the determination neither to take nor give quarter. To all intents and

purposes the paper proposed to create a weekly insurrection in the intellectual order. Not, indeed, by teaching the people to look to the force of rifles and cannon, which (to cut short all other considerations) were not to be had. It scoffed at the taunt of the landlords that the League "lacked all proper spirit by choosing their own weapons and using them at their own times, instead of letting their enemies have a convenient day for having them shot and finished with." As the British Constitution was forced upon us at the point of the bayonet, popular power in Ireland had only to seize upon it, and turn its principles upon the English Parliament, and upon its garrison in Ireland, with all the daring with which it had been turned against English kings by the Barons of Runnymede and the heroes of the Long Parliament. "Since it happens to be we who are respecting their Constitution, and they who are themselves outraging it at every step, it is not easy for a bewildered Proconsul to know what to do with us." If we had still something to learn in order to govern ourselves, the English Government had to learn that *they* could not govern us; and it was proposed to teach the grim lesson by turning against every department of alien misgovernment in detail the tumultuary might which had overturned Landlordism; to proceed from the conquest of the Rent Office to the possession of the municipal government of the towns; from the towns to take possession of



the Poor Law Unions ; from the Poor Law Unions to the Counties ; and from the conquest of the County Government to the conquest of Dublin Castle.<sup>1</sup>

Almost the whole of this ground has been traversed since without a cataclysm, and with the assent of both English Parties. Dublin Castle alone remains not quite conquered.

It became at once evident that the paper had established an electric communication with all the active forces of the country. Day and night the wheezy old Wharfedale machine, with which we were obliged to put up for our first numbers, had to go on the whole week through, churlishly supplying the feverish demands that were arriving with every post. Parnell, who was not easily moved to telegraphing, wired "Wonderful, sparkling all over." Egan wrote, bubbling over with congratulations. "I have an idea," he facetiously added. "We must keep that corner between Sparrow's and the opposite corner of Sackville Street for your statue by and by, and there from your pedestal, which is going to be a tall one, you can keep a watchful eye on Sir

<sup>1</sup> I recall with satisfaction that *United Ireland*, from the outset, was the first to propose that the forces which had emancipated the farmers should be turned next to the achievement of equivalent advantages for the hitherto unnoticed agricultural labourers, and for the revival of Irish industries. The first number began an active propaganda under the rubric of "Irish Trade for the Irish Towns," and contained letters from Parnell, Archbishop Croke, and the Lord Mayor Elect of Dublin (Mr. Charles Dawson), heartily commending the idea ; while the labourers, for the first time in their history, had a department all to themselves.

John,<sup>1</sup> and step round the corner to Mooney's<sup>2</sup> of a night if you should find immortality too cold a business." It was still more gratifying to hear that the paper became instantly first favourite with the prisoners left in Kilmainham. A high Castle official told a legal friend of mine, that he found Mr. Forster wading through the first number in his office at the Castle, with one hand buried in his shaggy hair. "Who on earth is this new mad-man?" was his rueful inquiry.

<sup>1</sup> Sir John Gray, once proprietor of the *Freeman*, whose statue stands close by.

<sup>2</sup> A famous Dublin tavern.

## CHAPTER XIV

KILMAINHAM

OCTOBER 1881

WHATEVER chances Gladstone's great measure had of proving to be a durable land settlement were nullified by the amendment of the House of Lords, rejecting the tenant's claim to be credited with the value of his own improvements in the assessment of his rent, and by the choice, as head of the new Land Commission, of one of the most amiable but one of the feeblest of men. The failure, which was attributed by Gladstone to Parnell and by Parnell to Gladstone, was in reality due to causes inherent in the relations between the two countries which neither of them could control. Nothing could reconcile the Irish tenants to Landlordism; nothing could reconcile the Irish landowners to see their incomes and seigniorial rights chopped to pieces by a trio of Dublin lawyers; and the English Ministry which would at that time propose the Bill—which after twenty years more of civil war was with universal assent passed, in 1903—for expropriating



Landlordism root and branch would have been chased from office with a shout of derision.

When, indeed, the House of Lords played havoc with the principles on which fair rents were to be determined, Gladstone gave out a leonine warning of resistance. The night the Lords' amendments came down for consideration the House of Commons was crowded in the expectation of a Ministerial defiance and a Dissolution. But that the Parliament, which came in for quite other purposes on the wave of the Midlothian campaign, should be sent to the country again upon an Irish issue, as to which all the average British elector knew was that Ireland had to be held down by Coercion, and execrated the Liberal Coercionists even more heartily than she did the House of Lords, was a pitch of Quixotism to which not all the eloquence of Midlothian could have reconciled the party politician of real life. Gladstone was forced to make the best of the mutilated Bill, and sought to assuage his indignation at the transgressions of the House of Lords by still fiercer attacks on the transgressions of Parnell for not accepting the Lords' mutilations with equal meekness.

In all his speeches of this period he accused Parnell with acrimony of a design to frustrate the new Act, through the fear that it would extinguish agitation. The Kilmainham Party accused their leader no less vehemently, if less publicly, of culpable weakness in favour both of the Bill and of the Act.

In reality, Parnell steered with a master hand between the folly by which the Bill would have been lost and the still greater peril of the unqualified acceptance of an Act stripped of half its virtue by the House of Lords, and left at the mercy of landlord administrators as to the remainder. He might have wrecked the Bill at various stages of its progress, and resisted all the clamour of his rasher colleagues that he should do so, because his perspicacity never failed to keep before his eyes the inestimable principles it legalised. He resisted no less determinedly the full tide of No-Rent passion at the National Convention held after the passing of the Act, when he stood almost alone for giving the Act a discriminating trial. But the recognition of the joint ownership of the tenant was now safely enshrined in the statute; and, on the other hand, the Lords' amendments practically ordering the tenants to be rented on their own improvements, and the untrustworthy character of the new Land Commission (whose Chief Commissioner, Mr. Justice O'Hagan, began his career by withdrawing and apologising for his own modest description of the Act as one whose purpose was to enable the tenant "to live and thrive"), convinced Parnell that the only possibility of making the new Act work out an even tolerable alleviation of the Irish peasant's lot was by testing it with caution and with all the undiminished potentialities of Agrarian Revolution gathered ominously in the background.

One of the new Land Commissioners was a Whig lawyer, Mr. Litton, whose appointment vacated his seat for the county of Tyrone. It was a county where the Orange landlords and the Presbyterian Whigs were accustomed to have their contests out without any intrusion from the spiritless and voteless Catholic Nationalists, who nevertheless formed a majority of the population. Everybody assumed that the new Whig nominee, Mr. T. A. Dickson, a man of amiable and liberal character, who, so to say, presented the new Land Act as his letter of recommendation, would be hailed with grateful acclamations by the loyal farmers of the North. That hard-fisted body of men, having done nothing themselves to win the Act, thought of nothing but turning it to their own immediate use, and repudiating any solidarity with the Southern and Western rebels to whom they really owed it. It was taken for granted that one of the first results of the Gladstonian legislation would be to make the Gladstonian Liberal Party supreme in Ulster. It was, on the contrary, the moment chosen by Parnell to unfurl in Ulster the flag before which ultimately the last strongholds of the Northern Whig Party went down.

The Queen's assent was no sooner given to the Act than Parnell crossed over to Tyrone, and, to the dismay of the Party hacks, confronted the Gladstonian nominee with a candidate of his own—a Unitarian clergyman, Rev. Harold Rylett, who



had figured in some of the most exciting episodes of the Land League wars. It was one of those sudden strokes of daring by which Parnell confounded doubting friends and over-confident antagonists. In vain the Catholic Bishops and clergy, amazed by the generosity of the new Act, captivated by the gentle and accommodating temper of the Gladstonian candidate, and habituated by ages of inferiority to seeing their flock humbly hewing wood for the Whigs, sought to dissuade Parnell from his mad enterprise, and even roundly denounced him and his Unitarian candidate from their altars. Father MacCartan, the parish priest of Donoughmore, who has lived to see Tyrone in complete possession of the Nationalists, was the only priest who could be got to stand upon his platforms. In vain a Convention, even of the timorous Land League Branches which had been formed in the county, besought him to allow Mr. Dickson to be elected unopposed. Nothing heeding, he threw himself and his foremost fighters, Messrs. Healy, T. P. O'Connor, and Sexton, upon the country ; made the valleys of Tyrone ring with Nationalist aspirations that had never been heard there since the old wars of the O'Neills ; bearded the landlord candidate and the Whig candidate with an impartial boldness in their respective dens ; and, when the ballot-boxes were opened, left Mr. Dickson the victor by only eighty votes, as the result of his ten days' raid upon a constituency

where three-fourths of the poor Nationalists were excluded from the £12 electorate.

The congenital incapacity of England to understand Irish affairs was seldom better illustrated than by the unanimity with which the universal English Press, Whig and Tory, hailed the result of the Tyrone election as the death-blow of Parnell's power in Ireland. They positively raved with joy. "A crushing and disastrous defeat!" was the verdict of the most thoughtful of them, the *Pall Mall Gazette*. "One of the most complete surprises of recent Irish politics," quoth the inspired writer of the *Daily Telegraph*. "Absolute and unprecedented discomfiture for the party of turbulence and intimidation," sang out the *Standard*. "Disposes finally of Mr. Parnell's pretensions to political foresight" was the weighty judgment of the *Times*, whose own "pretensions to political foresight" were to be subjected to so disastrous a test by the events of the next ten years in Ireland. Even at home the *Freeman's Journal* cautiously rejoiced over Mr. Dickson's victory, and rubbed vinegar into the wounds of the defeated side by an appeal to Mr. Forster to mark his magnanimity to beaten foes by releasing the imprisoned "suspects," hinting that never was "so noble an opportunity of conciliating the Irish people." Parnell's own notion of his "absolute and unprecedented discomfiture" was characteristic of the man. He travelled straight from the declaration of the poll in Tyrone to the neighbouring

constituency of Monaghan, whose Whig representative was about to accept an Assistant Land Commissionership. He then and there announced that he should be prepared to offer a Nationalist candidate for Monaghan, and for every other constituency in Ulster, against all comers, Whig or Tory, and roused such a spirit that it was announced two days after that the Whig placeman had renounced his Land Commissionership, "in the present state of affairs," rather than risk another contest such as had sealed the fate of Whiggery in Tyrone. Parnell's raid on Tyrone, which to the short-sighted was a blunder and a defeat, was in reality the revelation of a larger policy, and the annexation of a new province which had hitherto been the undisputed possession of the nominees of English parties.

The situation was, indeed, full of perils, which might well have daunted a less resolute spirit. While Parnell was carrying on his doubtful struggle for Tyrone, Mr. Dillon was entertained at a banquet in Dublin, at which he announced, to the dismay of many of us, his retirement from Irish affairs. His health was indeed so much shattered that nobody would have been surprised by his determination to seek a few years' retirement in the United States; but his speech left no doubt that considerations of health alone would not have decided him if grave differences of opinion as to the whole policy of the Party, in reference to the passing of the Land Act and its influence on the



future of the movement, had not arisen between him and his leader. These differences he shadowed forth in his speech at the Rotunda banquet, with the delicacy proper to his high and chivalrous patriotism, but also with a gravity which left no doubt of their seriousness.

"I will recall your attention," he said, "to the fact that when the Land Bill was first made public, I immediately adopted an attitude of uncompromising hostility towards it, and up to the time of my arrest I used whatever influence I had with the people of this country to secure that this Bill should be rejected with contempt, as a measure entirely inadequate to meet the necessities of the hour, and to satisfy the just demands of the people. I was influenced to adopt this course chiefly by two reasons—firstly, I feared that the passage of such a measure would render it much more difficult to carry on the movement of the Land League, because it would tend to divide the power of the nation by giving benefits to some individuals, by holding out to others the promise of benefits, which hopes might be doomed to disappointment, and by shutting out a third section of the people in the cold with no benefits at all. I feared, secondly, that if those Members of Parliament who are identified with the League devoted themselves during the long period which this Bill would be passing through Committee in trying to work improvements in it—I feared that the attention of the people would be inevitably and irresistibly turned towards London, and towards the Bill, and that the intensity of the agitation in Ireland would, as a natural consequence, become abated. But I had another and even stronger motive in asking the Irish people to reject this Bill, and to trust entirely to the enormous power developed by the Land League movement in this country. From the moment the Bill was published, I believed, and

I still believe, that upon its becoming law an entirely new situation would arise in this country . . . in which it would be infinitely more difficult, if not impossible, for the League to carry on a 'fighting' policy."

He recalled and reiterated a speech of his after the introduction of the Bill, in which he said :

It will, I fear, come to the Irish farmers to be a choice to take this Bill as a settlement or to trust to the Land League organisation. Because I say here, speaking on behalf of the organisation—I may be wrong, and I shall be glad if I prove to be so—I believe that if this Bill passes into law, more especially if it passes into law tolerated or countenanced by the League, it will in the course of a few months take all the power out of the arm of the Land League.

He declared with a fervour which his harshest critics knew to be sincere, that nobody would be more glad than he if those who believed the Act could be tested without weakening the arm of the League turned out to be right ; but he confessed he looked forward to the experiment with considerable distrust. His fear was that "the yoke of landlord ascendancy being made lighter, the people of Ireland will once more bow their heads beneath it, and consent once again to accept the position of living as slaves." He recognised that the majority of the Executive of the League—"who are at liberty"—were in favour of trying the Bill, for which he acknowledged there was a vast deal to be said ; but he held that the warning he had given "exonerated him from all responsibility for the future," and

under these circumstances he held "the only honourable course for him was to retire from public life for a couple of months, and leave those who believed in this policy unembarrassed to carry it out."

Parnell discussed with studied gentleness the difficulty thus created. To a few intimates who exhibited some of them long faces and one of them a sharp tongue at Morrison's Hotel, one evening after his return from the Tyrone election, he said in his tranquillising way :

Dillon is in poor health. He has been too much away from us. He will find things will work out all right. Old Gladstone would think it the prettiest compliment paid to his Bill, that it will in a few months extinguish the Land League. The Irish farmer is not such a goose. You might as well think of putting out a fire by pouring paraffin oil on it. This Act won't settle the question. Of course it won't. It proposes to unsettle it every fifteen years, whether we like or no. But so far as it works, it can only help the farmers. It will bankrupt one-third of the landlords, which is more than any No-Rent campaign of ours could do, and it will make the rest only too happy to be purchased out as an escape from the lawyers. It does not abolish Landlordism, but it will make Landlordism intolerable for the landlords. There is the Act, and you have either to lay hold of it or others will, and crush you. That is the only blunder that could damage the League. Irishmen have a bad habit of talking big, but they are very much obliged to you for not taking them at their word. If we had rejected this Bill, the farmers of Ireland would very properly have chased us out of the country. If we were not to make the best of it now, the only effect would be that it would



be used in spite of us, but that the landlords would get off with half the reductions we can, with judicious handling, knock out of these Land Commissioners.

Although I took no note of his words at the time, there was no forgetting the substance of his unpretentious apophthegms, as, after listening long to more excited counsels, he worried them out slowly and painfully, but with a distinctness on which there was no going back.

But the National Convention was about to assemble, and everybody except Parnell was in a state of some perturbation as to the result. There was the danger that either coercion had so far dismayed or the splendid bribe held forth in the Land Act so far demoralised the agrarian mind, that the assembly would be a poor one, and, according to the current English prognostications, the agitators be left high and dry. There was the graver danger that the more ardent spirits, coming up in the full flush of a revolutionary fever, would hear of no parley with the Act, and hurry the country into scenes of chaos and intestine conflict, in which the Parliamentary Party and the Kilmainham Party would once for all part company. The first anxiety was at an end when the Convention assembled. The most case-hardened of English Pressmen, casting his eyes over the fifteen hundred delegates who thronged the famous "Round Room," was fain to confess the insanity of Mr. Forster's pet delusion, that nobody adhered to Parnell in Ireland except

“a parcel of dissolute ruffians and village tyrants.” The assembly represented all the physical and moral attributes of a young nation exulting in its strength. The other peril proved to be a far more real one. Parnell's own voice was the only one heard during the first day's discussions that was not for the scornful and uncompromising rejection of the Act. To Henry George's disciples, intent on an unrivalled opportunity of realising the Nationalisation of the Land—to fiery young peasants, intoxicated with the delight of seeing the demon power of Landlordism reeling under their blows—it seemed little short of a betrayal to ask them to stop short in a career of victory, by which the glorious vagueness of the revolutionary dreamer could see no difficulty in completing the abolition of Landlordism and of Rent, without the aid of lawyers or statutes.

Parnell's opening address was mostly listened to in a respectful but frigid silence. The sure and penetrating statesmanship with which he singled out the incurable error of the Act—that it proposed to reopen the Land question every fifteen years, and must consequently be a continual source of contention between landlords and tenants, “and keep classes in Ireland divided so that we may thus be prevented from utilising our united strength for the purpose of recovering our lost rights of legislating for ourselves”—passed unnoticed at the time, signally though its wisdom has been vindicated by

subsequent events. It was only when he declared "the Land Act settled nothing," or "our principles demand that rent shall be abolished," that the "loud and prolonged cheering" came. But he abated not a jot of his determination to stand by the central recommendation of the official resolutions, viz. that, while reiterating that no settlement would be satisfactory which did not involve the complete abolition of Landlordism, the Executive should be authorised to ascertain the true effect of the Land Act upon the rental of Ireland, by presenting test cases upon estates in various parts of Ireland in the new Land Courts.

This issue of testing the Act or of rejecting it *sans phrase* was promptly taken up by the impatient disciples of the Kilmainham Party. A rugged Northern Land Nationaliser, Mr. Lewis Smyth, leaped to the front with the laconic amendment: "That we don't entertain the Land Act at all." His advice, "Do with it what the English did with the Irish party—take it head and neck and bundle it out," was cheered to the echo. There were more serious forces behind. Mr. Patrick Forde, "in the name of eight hundred Irish-American Branches, adjured the Convention to unfurl the banner of No-Rent," if they did not want to dishearten America, and the further 30,000 francs with which the cablegram was accompanied was scarcely needed to attest the reality of the power he spoke for. A cablegram from Chicago affirmed "it would be



nothing short of national suicide if the Irish people accepted the Act."

Parnell's own sister, Miss Fanny Parnell (one with all the Promethean passion and the Promethean unhappiness of the poet), sent me for publication in *United Ireland* some verses of scorn, headed "To England: the Land Act of 1881," of which the first lines ran:

Tear up the parchment lie!  
Scatter its fragments to the hissing wind—  
And hear again the People's first and final cry:  
No more for you, O lords, we'll dig and grind;  
No more for you the castle, and for us the sty!

Mr. Thomas Brennan sent a letter from Kilmainham Jail, with the request that it should be read to the Convention, "conveying the opinion of all the prisoners here" that "if the will of the country was in favour of the policy indicated in the cablegrams from the American Branches," they need not let their decision be influenced by any consideration of amnesty for the prisoners. Mr. O'Neill Larkin, the special correspondent of the *Irish World*, went a step further, and after insisting that the bulk of the money contributed from the United States was given in virtue of a sacred compact, that no quarter was to be given to Landlordism, gave rude expression to the increasing bickerings between the Kilmainham Party and the Parliamentary Party, by warning the Irish people not to let their attention be diverted from the fight in Ireland to "the action of Parliamentary

blatherumskites in the House of Commons." It is true that before the Convention closed, Mr. James Redpath, a brave and witty American pressman, who had played a conspicuous part in the early history of the Land League in Mayo,<sup>1</sup> resented hotly the right of "presumptuous individuals" to speak for the bulk of the Irish race in America in attempting to dictate a policy to the people at home, declaring that the man who in America should talk of Parnell's illustrious Party as "Parliamentary blatherumskites" would be thrown out of the window. But this was two days after the crucial struggle was over. On the first day there was apparently nobody to withstand the storm. With a lack of moral courage not unpardonable in a country where, traditionally, to be extreme was almost always to be extremely in the right, even speakers of grave and responsible character submitted to the prevailing contagion so far, as to denounce the resolution in favour of testing the Act in their speeches, in the secret confidence that Parnell would succeed in getting the better of the hot-heads. Twenty years later, when there was question of making the best use of an Act which supplied the means of abolishing Landlordism altogether, and realising Parnell's dream of the union of classes, there was still enough of the same perverse tendency to be uncompromising

<sup>1</sup> He was the first to use the word "Boycott" in the sense in which it has since been incorporated in every language of Christendom.

at the wrong moment left to ravage the fairest part of Ireland's harvest. The greatest oratorical success of the Convention was that of a young priest who, in language of flame, and with a threatening arm outstretched, declared "he would distrust and absolutely spurn with indignation the political sagacity which would ask them for a moment to pause upon their road and tamper with this rag of a Bill, or that would ever ask them, after the false faith of the last six months, to look again to England for justice." The enraptured crowd, when he had finished, would not be silenced until he came forth to make a second speech, headier still. As not uncommonly happens in such cases, the excellent young rhetorician, whom nothing would moderate in this hour of triumph, was not heard of afterwards in the years of storm, when an uncompromising spirit would have been of more public service, and would have been subjected to a sterner test. The Kilmainham Party had seemingly carried the day. Every reference to the test resolution was received with shouts of "No trial!" "Yes!" cried one ironical orator from Tralee, "we will give it a Jedwood trial—hang it first and try it afterwards." An observer who was only guided by the cheering might have inferred that Parnell stood all but alone in the assembly. None even of his Parliamentary lieutenants joined in the fray. He literally "bore the battle on his single shield." While the Convention was still afire with warlike rhetoric, and



when he perhaps had judged the uninterrupted monotony of the denunciations of the Act was beginning to pall, Parnell quietly interposed with some observations of the prosiest character, but, as usual, shot through with a few sentences revealing a will of steel. He put aside with a gentle contempt the error of most of the speakers that he contemplated accepting the Act. The resolution authorised the Executive to test the Act, not to close with it. "I myself don't believe the Act will stand the test," he said in his matter-of-fact way, "but we should be assuming an unreasonable and indefensible position in the eyes of the world, and I venture to think in our own eyes also, if we refused to test this measure. If, having acted reasonably and having tested it, we find it breaks in the test, we shall be justified by the public opinion of the world in whatever stand we take, No-Rent or otherwise, with regard to the Act for the future." Here was at once the good sense to realise what might be extracted from the Act and the grim resolution to resume the fight with redoubled strength in so far as the test might prove unsatisfactory. To a silent listener like myself, who had no more thought of making a public speech than of standing upon my head before the Convention, but all whose sympathies went out to those who placed more trust in Irish manhood than in English statutes, that scene of the strong man tranquilly breasting his way against the tide that threatened to swallow him gave me an im-

pression which was never lost, that Parnell was at one and the same time as truly conservative as the most staid ecclesiastic in the assembly, and, to any necessary extent, more truly revolutionary than the most blatant of the young lions who roared at him for extreme measures. His fitness for the mastership of many legions was never better proved. The tellers had been named for a division, but, when it came to a show of hands, the majority in favour of the test resolution was so overwhelming that the Kilmainham Party, in a silence which was not the least impressive part of the encounter, accepted their defeat.

The next three weeks witnessed a series of scenes which exhibited Parnell at the meridian height of his power as a leader of men. After a few days' rest in his Wicklow home, testing the gold washings of the river that ran through his demesne, or pondering over his pet problems in trigonometry, he made a triumphant entry into Dublin, with a hundred thousand men all but tearing him and one another limb from limb in the paroxysms of their frantic allegiance. It was after midnight when he escaped from their wild embraces. By the morning train he was on his way to a County Convention in Maryborough; the next day he addressed the Central Branch of the Land League; a night afterwards he was at the head of the multitude who welcomed Father Sheehy on his release from Kilmainham Jail; within the same week he was in

the midst of the most exciting scene of all, among his own constituents of Cork City, of all the hot Keltic race the hottest in their ecstasies and the most bewitching in their clinging tenderness. In the midst of all this round of intoxicating excitements, he applied himself steadily to the work of sifting out his test cases for the Land Courts. Before or after one of those speeches, every sentence of which was scanned by hundreds of thousands of hostile eyes, he would break away from the excited admirers who beset his hotel, and shut himself up with some shrewd attorney or cool-headed local captain, working out the intricate particulars of scores of suggested claims, with a view to lighting upon those that would be most likely to eventuate in a satisfactory standard of rent for the different classes of tenancy. Mr. Healy was lavishing all the resources of his indefatigable energy and unequalled knowledge of the Act in directing the corps of solicitors who were spread all over the country selecting appropriate cases. Parnell's two objects of utilising the Act but of utilising it under the supreme influence of the League, were being accomplished as by some dark wizardry, without gunshots or bloodshed, but with the relentlessness of fate.

It would, indeed, be too much to say that he was not sometimes swept farther than he would have cared to go in the contagious heat of the revolution surging around him. Even the most expert riders of the whirlwind cannot always mark out its path.



Gladstone pounced with an eagle's claw upon the statement wrung from the Irish leader, by the sight of a hundred thousand Cork rebels in wild array before him : " Those who want to preserve even the golden link of the Crown must see to it that that shall be the only link connecting the two countries." Another unguarded expression of his, in a banquet speech, obviously wide of the exact facts, that " there is plenty of room for a land reformer of the future in the task of reducing the Irish rack-rental of to-day from seventeen millions a year to the two or three millions a year which I define as a fair rent," was still more eagerly fastened upon. The rental of Ireland was never anything approaching seventeen millions, but the Irish annuities under the Land Purchase Act will not exceed the three millions desiderated by Parnell, even in the *chaleur communicative* of a Cork banquet.

He himself alluded with a good-humoured raillery to the temptation of the moment towards lurid language. " For my part," he said, " having been during several years of my political life considerably in advance of the rest of the country, I am exceedingly pleased to find, as the result of my excursions during the last few weeks, that the rest of the country is considerably in advance of me." But wherever the framework of his policy was really touched, it was found to be of adamant. In the midst of the torchlights and frenzy of his midnight meeting in Dublin, he took care to tell his

hearers, "warned by the history of the past, we know that we must fight this battle within the limits of the Constitution. We shall not permit ourselves for an instant to be tempted beyond our strength."

For a man of Gladstone's constitutional righteousness, this Irishman, tearing down Bastilles and invading Tuileries with a determined reasonableness which gunshots could not pierce nor warrants seize upon, was an enigma wholly unintelligible. For the first time in the collisions of the weak and passionate race with the strong and stolid one, it was the Englishman who lost his head and the Irishman who went on his way with a calmness too self-restrained to be even contemptuous. While, as we have just seen, it took all Parnell's strength to save the Act from summary rejection by followers of his own, who mistook his policy for pusillanimity, he was assailed by Gladstone, on the other hand, as the cold-blooded politician who was withholding the blessings of the Act from a people thirsting to receive them. In the early days of October the Prime Minister made a speech at Leeds, which made it clear that, far from appreciating and assisting Parnell's moderating influence, he had made up his mind, at the risk of playing the game of the No-Rent school, to force the Irish leader's hand by goading him and the Land League to fight for their lives. He seized with avidity some flamboyant resolutions of Archbishop (afterwards Cardinal) M'Cabe and sixteen of the Irish Bishops, glorify-

ing the Act, and in no doubtful terms stigmatising the Land League as its enemies. He omitted to note that they proceeded from a meeting from which Archbishop Croke and his friends were absent, and that the really remarkable feature of the document was not the number of Bishops who signed it, but the number of Bishops who did not. Stooping to one of the familiar devices of English statecraft in Ireland, Gladstone sought to sow division in the Irish ranks by singling out Mr. Dillon for encomiums at the expense of his leader.

Suppose, gentlemen, you were like Mr. Dillon—that you believed Ireland entitled to complete independence, and suppose you found a measure passed by what some of them over there think an alien Parliament, granting, with a liberality unknown to history, the Land legislation which now prevails in Ireland—what would you do? Would you, in consequence of your ulterior views, reject that Act? . . . No, you would not. You would say that you were not justified in intercepting the benevolent legislation of a measure like the Land Act, and that is what Mr. Dillon alone, I am sorry to say, among his friends, has done. He will not give up his extreme National views, but neither will he take upon himself the fearful responsibility of attempting to plunge his country into permanent disorder and chaos by intercepting the operation of the Land Act. I claim him as an opponent, but as an opponent whom I am glad to honour.

The perversity with which the rôles of the two distinguished Irishmen were transposed—for it was Mr. Dillon who regarded with apprehension the plan of testing the Act, in the belief that the result



would be in a few months to efface the power of the Land League—was not the worst blunder of the Leeds speech. A rudimentary knowledge of the Irish character, and especially of Mr. Dillon's own high and chivalrous code of honour, would have told the Premier that in making compliments to his address the foundation of an indictment of the National Policy just approved by the Convention, he was taking the best of all methods of persuading Mr. Dillon to sink all preferences of his own in order to identify himself with his bitterly reviled leader. The Leeds speech was no sooner read in Ireland than John Dillon emerged from his retirement to repel with scorn the insult, none the less hateful because it was probably all unconscious, of coupling his name with an Englishman's device for dividing Irishmen. His reply to the Premier's unlucky panegyric was that "he shrank from the contamination of his praise." He could only guess that Gladstone must have been the victim of a practical joke, in his travesty of his (Mr. Dillon's) views of the Land Act, when he complimented him upon being the only one who declared against "intercepting the benevolent legislation of the Land Act," considering that his attitude all along was a diametrically opposite one. He once more frankly avowed, that if he could have prevented it, Gladstone's Act would never have been passed; that "his only trouble was that he had not succeeded in standing between the country and the

Act so far." He finally raised the enthusiasm and affection of his countrymen to the highest pitch by declaring that "at no time since I first became a political follower of Mr. Parnell have I seen more reason to admire his generalship and his political skill than at the present moment." The Leeds speech, in fact, if it was meant to widen the breach between "the Kilmainham Party" and the Parliamentary Party, had the opposite effect of effacing all distinctions between them. If it was intended to diminish Parnell's power of frustrating the Act, it made it all but impossible, even for him, to get the Act spoken of in Ireland without execration. To the Premier's charge that the doctrines preached by the Convention, and since passed into law by statutes proceeding from both English Parties, were "doctrines of sheer public plunder"; his still worse attempt to confound the policy of the Irish leader with hateful and murderous crimes—an attempt that was not finally given over in England until the suicide of Richard Pigott, with the moneys of the *Times* newspaper in his pocket; and finally, his affectation to treat Parnell's policy of "test cases" as a fraudulent "game"—which he undertook by main force to put down with the historic menace that "the resources of civilisation against our enemies are not yet exhausted"—there could be only one reply from Ireland. A great wave of indignation against the calumnies and threats of the Leeds speech swept the Irish nation to its

depths. Again it took the all but imperturbable self-restraint of the Irish chief to hold down the passions he was supposed in England to be letting loose. Two days afterwards he was in Wexford, in presence of scenes that would have overheated the brain of, perhaps, any other man of his generation. His Wexford speeches had the touch of fire that thrilled the country, but were above all else characterised by a provoking coolness, a merciless strength of argument, and a suspicion of contempt for the thunders of his angry antagonist that gave him most decidedly the best of the duel with the mighty orator to whom he was replying. He dismissed Gladstone's *post-mortem* tributes to the statesmanship of O'Connell and Butt, in contrast with their degenerate descendants, with the remark: "In the opinion of English statesmen, no man is good in Ireland until he is dead and buried, and unable to strike a blow for Ireland"; adding, with a note of gaiety not without its sad prescience: "Perhaps the day may come when even I may get a good word from English statesmen as a moderate man—after I am dead and buried." He had no difficulty in showing that on two separate occasions it was the vote of the Irish Party that saved the Bill they were now taunted with conspiring against. Time has wholly vindicated his plea, that it was only by cautious trial, and not by unconditional acceptance, the Act could be made to produce even a tolerable alleviation of an incurable system.



The villainous imputation of sympathy with crime he waved aside with a gesture too haughty for more than a word of cold and biting scorn. He quoted with terrific force Gladstone's confession that "the Government had no moral force behind them in Ireland"; far from replying to the gasconade of increased coercion by any gasconade of his own, he said of the Leeds threats, "These are very brave words that he uses, but it strikes me that they have a ring about them like the whistle of a schoolboy on his way through a churchyard at night"; and, looking across the waste of bitter coercion and reprisals now before the country, he wound up with the anticipation—calm, almost business-like, but sure as if his tongue had been touched with the Hebrew prophet's coal of fire—that Gladstone would yet eat his brave words, and recognise "that England's mission in Ireland has been a failure, and that Irishmen have established their right to govern Ireland by laws made by themselves, for themselves, upon Irish soil."

Never surely was the whirlwind more victoriously ridden. For the next week he shut himself up with Mr. Healy and the lawyers, perfecting his test cases. The popular strength was already sufficiently solidified. Could he have chosen, he would have preferred to make no further speeches until the new Land Courts had shown their quality for good or ill. But even to the curb of such a rider the whirlwind will not always respond. The

Conventions and mass meetings went on with ever-increasing fervour. One memorable night's conversation at Morrison's Hotel gave me for the first time a startling glimpse of Parnell's own anxieties lest he should be driven further than he thought wise, and thus give Forster some pretext for his manifest determination to get the League, at all hazards, out of the way of the new Land Courts. Parnell had addressed a great Convention of the county of Kildare during the day, and was finishing his chop in the midst of an excited group of Members of Parliament, organisers, and priests in the fireless private room which he engaged on very rare occasions at Morrison's. He spoke scarcely at all, but with his head graciously bent forward, his ears attentive, and his eyes modestly fixed on the fireplace, as was his wont, listened with an air of respectful deference to the words of wisdom poured in upon him. It was this habit of patient and long-suffering attention, even to the loquacity of bores, which led shallow people to impute to him weakness, and a readiness to take the first suggestion offered to him in an hour of emergency. I know at least two persons who are convinced that it was the ideas they broached to him in the train going down which Mr. Parnell appropriated almost *literatim* in his speech at Wexford. It was only when the noisier portion of the company had filtered out, and only two or three intimates were left, that Parnell began to speak.

To my amazement (for I was quite as hot as the hottest in the transports of the revolutionary fever of the hour) he spoke with considerable alarm, and even with some vexation, of the lengths to which some people were pushing him.

He announced that he would attend no more public meetings for the present, and that he would not go to jail. He unquestionably had a peculiar shrinking from solitary confinement. Certain hereditary traditions of his family history would largely account for the gloom with which any allusion to the subject always filled him. But no friend whose opinion was worth having could ever have suspected him of allowing his political calculations to be regulated by any apprehension of his own. He was one of the slowest of mankind to go into a position of danger, but, once in it, Leonidas was not more unshakable at his post. "This old gentleman is in a temper," he said; "he will let Buckshot<sup>1</sup> do as he likes, and if you want to know what coercion can be, just try a Quaker. No,

<sup>1</sup> His own nickname for Mr. W. E. Forster, who first substituted buckshot for ball cartridges as the ammunition of the Irish constabulary. The excellent philanthropist, with the very best motives, caused the constabulary to discharge their firearms with more freedom, because the effect was supposed to be less deadly, whereas the real effect was to wound half-a-dozen women or children with a shower of buckshot, where only one would have been hit by a bullet. This nickname so stuck that it was not only the Chief Secretary's name among the Castle officials, but was freely adopted by himself. On his death-bed—one of the most mournful passages of the eternal Irish tragedy—he sent word to a young Irish lady who had once been very friendly, "Tell her if she saw old Buckshot now, she would forgive him."



they will suppress the League, and snap us all up, and where will your No-Rent gentlemen be then?" A member of the Executive, who, a few days afterwards, when the proclamation suppressing the Land League appeared, departed for his country home and was not further heard of in the movement, made some remark to show his contempt for Coercion.

"Mr. —," said Parnell, with very unusual severity, "I daresay you were born to be crucified. I was not. I am for winning something for the country all the time. It is the best way of winning more. It is always the way in Ireland," he said, speaking slowly as if in reverie that nobody cared to interrupt. "See how they pushed O'Connell to talk such rubbish in his Mallow Defiance. It was sillier than anything of our own," he said, with a gleam of malicious humour. Then very gravely, "It was the end of him. And how quietly those young warrior gentlemen took it for five years, while the poor old man was dying off. I daresay O'Connell was a bit off his head when he made his Mallow Defiance." Whereupon we fell a-debating the old controversy, *Young Ireland v. Old Ireland*, Parnell holding largely with O'Connell, who had difficulties of which the self-confident "young men" knew not, but appraising higher than any of the Young Irishmen Fintan Lalor, who alone had a workable plan. If there had been railways then to enable him to travel over the country, and any means

of getting him the ear of the people, Lalor might have anticipated the Land League by thirty years, and produced a very respectable rebellion which could not well have been worse for the country than the Famine.

We parted late, with an understanding that he was to leave the country in a few days for, I think, a continental holiday, after giving the final touch to the preparations for lodging the test cases. The hall porter was snoring heavily on his bench when we awakened him to let us out. The Post Office clock struck two, when three of us broke off our final excited colloquy at the corner of O'Connell Bridge. At six o'clock the porter at Morrison's was called up to receive a visit from Mr. Mallon, the Chief of the Dublin Detective Division, with a warrant for the arrest of Parnell as one "reasonably suspected of treasonable practices." The porter managed to keep the detectives in the hall while he communicated the ill news to Parnell in his bedroom. He told him every servant in the house would die for him, and pointed out a passage among the chimney-pots over which he could easily reach the attic window of a neighbouring friendly house. "Thanks, no—I don't think so," was the reply, after what seemed a moment of deliberation. "Kindly bid them wait below," he added, issuing his order to the detectives with a hauteur of which his own servants never knew a trace. He was prodigiously angry. Chief Mallon,

like most Irish officials not wholly corrupted, had a good deal of the original Nationalist mingled with the instincts of the detective officer. He veiled his eyes deferentially before a Chief mightier than he. Parnell told us that one of the detectives, a great red-bearded fellow, in the hall, staggered and looked faint. His first thought was that he had been drinking, but he soon saw it was emotion quite unmixed. It was one of the not more than half-a-dozen occasions in his life when Parnell showed either temper or haughtiness. The detectives dared not speak, or scarcely look, while on the way to Kilmainham Jail. I am certain they would have turned the horse's head about and driven where he ordered them, had he chosen to intimate a wish. His observation to some friend on the way to the prison, "Tell the Irish people I will consider they have not done their duty if I am soon released," might have told anybody less infatuated than Forster what was coming. But it was only after reaching Kilmainham, when the prison officers proposed to go through the usual form of searching him, that the pent-up fire burst forth. "How dare you?" he cried, starting back, his arms drawn up convulsively, every muscle in his body hardening to steel. The unfortunate official was ready to sink under the flags. We afterwards asked Parnell what he should have done if the head warder had persisted. "I should have killed him!" he said in a nervous whisper, between



his teeth. Then, after a moment, with one of his pleasant smiles, "Poor old Searle, how he would have been surprised!"

The Greek Chorus would have had here as sombre a theme as Æschylus could have devised for them as to the everlasting tragedy of things. Here were two men, of colossal power, and as to the fundamental realities of the Irish situation really at one, who were nevertheless set hopelessly at cross purposes. Gladstone, who hated Coercion, gave Forster *carte blanche* in his moment of maddest conviction that Force was the only remedy. In his passion for securing a fair trial for his Land Act, he put an end to all chance of a fair trial. Parnell, who desired nothing better than to test the Act in a manner which, everybody now knows, would have doubled the fair fruits of the Act, and made the inevitable transition to the Abolition of Landlordism a swift and crimeless one, was turned from the Land Courts into the prison, where there was only one weapon left to him. He and his chief lieutenants were collected together into a new and vaster Kilmainham Party, where it ought to have been the first care of statesmanship to discredit the old one. Fierce as the arrest of Parnell aimed at the heart of Ireland, the terms of almost insolent triumph in which the Premier announced it in the London Guildhall did still more to raise Irish feeling to white heat :—

The Government recognises that it is charged in Ireland with the most arduous and solemn duties, and those duties to the best of its ability it is determined to perform. It is no unnatural criticism on those words which expressed the hope that they would not be words alone. Our decision, my Lord Mayor, our determination has been that to the best of our power they should be carried into acts; and towards the vindication of law, of order, and the rights of property, of the freedom of the land, of the first elements of political life and civilisation, the first step has been taken in the arrest of the man (loud and prolonged cheering and waving of hats and handkerchiefs)—in the arrest of the man who, unhappily, from motives which I do not challenge, which I cannot examine, and with which I have nothing to do, has made himself beyond all others prominent in the attempt to destroy the authority of the law and to substitute what would be nothing more nor less than anarchical oppression exercised upon the people of Ireland (cheers).

It was as if the Germans had not contented themselves with entering Paris, without scattering the bones of Napoleon in the Invalides. The initial blunder of Gladstone and Forster was their belief that Parnellism was a tyranny, for ridding them of which the Irish people would be secretly thankful. The next six months were, on the contrary, to bear tragic witness that the Government had let loose the most terrific storm of National protest ever raised by a disarmed people—a storm which they could only finally appease by suing for peace to their own prisoner. From every corner of the island there rose up a cry of anguish and of wrath. In Cork City the shops were instantly shut up in mourning.

The Tipperary Land League raised the shout which was soon in every throat, that the test cases must be abandoned, and no rent be paid until Parnell's release. Even a man so little inclined to headstrong passion as Mr. J. E. Redmond declared in Wexford: "Yesterday we were willing to test the Act, to-day it is our duty to trample upon it. Until Parnell is released, I say it is the duty of the people to strike against all rent!" At a special meeting of the Executive of the Land League, a firm resolution was shown to go on steadily upon the lines prescribed by Parnell and approved by the National Convention. But the continuation of the policy of testing the Act was just what Forster had resolved, at any cost of civil war, to prevent. The next morning Mr. Sexton,<sup>1</sup> who was in principal charge of the Head Offices; Mr. J. P. Quinn, the Assistant Secretary; and Mr. W. Doris, the Second Assistant Secretary, were all carried off to prison, thus completely dismembering the staff charged with the preparation of the test cases. A still more ominous sign was the aggressive display of immense forces of police around the neighbourhood of the public meeting of protest held the same night in the Rotunda. Forster's armed forces marched and countermarched and challenged with the unmistakable air of men spoiling for a fight. The "whiff of grape-shot" policy was manifestly the *consigne* from the Castle.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Sexton was ill in bed when arrested, and was released after a few days.



Parnell had managed to send from Kilmainham a letter to be read to the Rotunda meeting, in which he gave the Government a plain warning that, if the League should be suppressed, and the tenants' constitutional right to approach the Land Courts unfettered thus abolished, they would find themselves face to face with a general refusal of rents. The member of the Executive to whom the letter was addressed (Mr. Dillon) considered it wiser not to make it public at the meeting, until the Executive should have had an opportunity of deliberating over so grave an announcement. Accordingly, after the Rotunda meeting was over, and while the streets outside were still throbbing with the march of excited crowds, and the provocations of still more excited police battalions, a private meeting of such of the chief men of the movement as could be gathered together was held in a sitting-room of the Imperial Hotel. Mr. Dillon was there, and Mr. T. D. Sullivan, and Mr. Biggar and Mr. James O'Kelly, Dr. J. E. Kenny, and Mr. P. J. Sheridan of Tubbercurry, with one or two others besides myself. Nobody could any longer doubt that it was the determination of the Government to break up wholly the machinery for presenting the test cases, and do the League to death. The conditions preconised in Parnell's letter being thus present, the debate arose whether the time was not come for striking back, while there were still any members of the Executive at large to make a No-Rent move-

ment an effective one. Mr. Dillon did not express any decided opinion, beyond what he had just told the meeting in the Rotunda—that he would be greatly disappointed if the arrest of Parnell facilitated the collection of rent in Ireland; that the refusal of rent was so grave a step that the Executive, so long as there was any possibility left of working out the policy of the Convention, had not considered it their duty to recommend it, but that if any Irish county took it upon itself to lead the van, in avenging their leader by refusing to pay rent until he was released, that was a course they were at perfect liberty to adopt, if, on mature deliberation, they were determined to adhere to it. In other words, he seemed to shrink from taking the responsibility for a No-Rent movement upon the Executive, while encouraging the people of particular districts to assume the responsibility themselves. Dr. Kenny and myself, and I think one or two others, pressed strongly that if action were to be taken at all, it must be taken now, and with the whole strength of the organisation, while its power was still unbroken. Mr. T. D. Sullivan was opposed to a No-Rent movement tooth and nail. "It is against the law of God," he declared with great earnestness. "The Bishops and priests will be against you. You will never get the Irish people to go against their priests. It is all wrong, it is immoral, and I'll have nothing to do with it." Mr. Biggar was next asked for his opinion. He had

been slumbering balmily during great part of Mr. Sullivan's speech, but was vaguely awake to the peroration. "Well, you see, mister," he observed, "the morality of the thing is right enough. The point is, will you get the fellows to do it?" There was a roar of laughter at this characteristically canny view of the situation. True to his character of "the Fenian Whig"—the rough man of war doubled with the astute politician—Mr. O'Kelly, whose soldierly allegiance to the flag was worthy of the days of chivalry, was nevertheless so deeply conscious of the blessings with which the Land Act, however ill administered, was pregnant for the Irish tenants, that he inveighed against a No-Rent policy as hotly as Mr. Sullivan, though for different reasons. "A prisoner of war has no business dictating the campaign," he declared, with an oath smelling of the powder of the Foreign Legion. "Make damned fools of yourselves as much as you like. I will be on my way to Italy in the morning." He was, as a matter of fact, on his way to Kilmainham Jail in the morning, and received with an old campaigner's philosophy the mocking congratulations of his companions in captivity on Forster's grateful appreciation of his moderation. "I forgot old Buckshot is a more damned fool still," was the only apology he would offer.

The midnight council separated without coming to any decision. As we separated, the street outside was a scene of mad excitement, the police



charging through the crowds with a fury that nothing except the fear of an armed insurrection could explain. At ten o'clock the next morning, as I was turning into the *Freeman* office to inquire as to the rumoured arrest of Mr. O'Kelly, I was arrested myself on a warrant alleging me to be "reasonably suspected of treasonable practices." Almost every remaining man connected with the direction of the movement was struck at during the day. Mr. Biggar escaped from the net by departing for England by the early morning mail-boat. Mr. Arthur O'Connor, who was to have succeeded Mr. Sexton in charge of the Central Offices, was actually visiting Parnell in Kilmainham Jail while the detectives were searching the Imperial Hotel for him. When the detectives followed the scent to Kilmainham, their prey was gone. Mr. Healy, who was returning from England, was stopped by a special messenger and despatched on the more useful business of a mission to the United States in concert with Mr. T. P. O'Connor. By Parnell's prudent foresight, the Treasurer of the League, Mr. Egan, and his treasures, were safely lodged in Paris, or the movement might have been bankrupted and robbed of its war chest at a stroke. Mr. Dillon, whom Gladstone had only a week previously beslobbered with his praises, was re-arrested in the afternoon—nominally on a warrant charging him with inciting to the non-payment of rent, but really, as it was concluded in every cabin in Ire-

land, because he had foiled English statecraft in its manœuvres to set Parnell and himself at daggers drawn in this hour of trial. All through the day squadrons of dragoons were kept prancing about the streets of Dublin ; infantry were massed on the quays ; military bugles were kept sounding—either in a nervous panic or in the determination to strike terror once for all to the nation's heart, and have done with it. Mr. Forster took every measure to exasperate the public anger, which a wiser strategy would have taught him to mollify. When night came, great masses of policemen were unloosed recklessly and with an extraordinary ferocity in the crowded streets ; the defenceless people were treated with such barbarity that a deputation of the Corporation waited upon the Chief Secretary to implore him to hold his hand, and were answered with the somewhat brutal apophthegm : " Clearing the streets is no milk-and-water matter." From that night a city which had not been for many years stained with a crime of blood became the easy prey of the secret societies, and was soon the seat of the most desperate conspiracy that ever shook the nerves of English officials in Ireland.

My own first sensation after arrest was that of a blissful calm, as of one who had passed by a sudden death into a region of eternal rest. It was ever my way, once alight, to burn on to the socket. Since the first publication of *United Ireland*, there was no hour of the day, and not more than four of

the night, when I was free from a toil which had all the exhausting force of a fever. Practically every number of the paper up to the date of my arrest was written by myself from start to finish; not merely the leading articles and the page of paragraph comments, but columns upon columns every week of letters upon all sorts of topics that could set young men thinking; the editorial answers to the innumerable correspondents who began to flock in as to a national confessional for guidance; the materials for the Cartoon; even the sorry verse with which I had to stammer forth the wild passion of the hour until more *Æolian* spirits were tempted to catch up the strain. The only exception was a Parliamentary letter, "Among the Saxons," in which Mr. Healy gave a foretaste of that grim wit and keen intellectual surgery which were to be, in after years, among the prime recommendations of the paper. But the furnishing of the editorial pages was the lightest, because the most congenial, part of the burden. The commercial character of the establishment had to be raised not only from death, but from the deep damnation in which the Pigott regime had sunk it; and the miracle fell wholly to myself, to whom figures, accounts, and finance were as abhorrent as the demons who disputed Dante's passage to the city of Dis. I every morning opened, read, and classified every letter that came to the office from agents, advertisers, poets, and politicians, and they were at least a hundred a day;



checked the receipts of money-orders and cheques ; transacted the bank business ; paid the staff ; and spent the days when the rush of publication was over poring over the agents' accounts, stimulating districts where the sales were small, hunting up new agents and advertisers, and striving (not without an astonishing degree of success) to make ends meet with no working capital beyond a limited overdraft at the Hibernian Bank. Add to all this a state of health which for many years made it a puzzle to the doctors how I could live—a nervous system with as subtle a gift of torture as the pulleys of a mediæval rack, a cough for ever knocking at my heart, and a head overloaded with the weight of a mountain—and it will not be difficult to understand the sense of celestial freedom from responsibility with which I, so to say, descended into my grave in Kilmainham under the charge of my detective grave-diggers.

It was, after all, death on the battlefield, with my face to the foe. The paper had fought on, from week to week, as from barricade to barricade, with a wholly exhilarating vigour. To be a piece of literature, indeed, it had no pretension. Whatever dreams once haunted me of doing my life's work for Ireland in bookish cloisters and in the beechen shade rather than upon the noisy market-place were gone. The duty of the hour quite manifestly was to give up everything—literary possibilities, as well as health, liberty, home, and fortune—to the one aim of

being found wherever the blows were thickest, in a supreme National struggle to end the feudal system I had seen at its work of diabolical oppression, breeding famine and crimes, and afterwards in a dimmer background to see a regenerated Irish nation emerging radiantly from the darkest of all history's dungeons. I can the more freely say that, for many a year to come, my every thought was given to Ireland, because there was little virtue in renouncing personal tastes or possessions which had become encumbrances for one whose last domestic tie with life was on the point of being broken.

It mattered little that literary grace had to be sacrificed to the exigencies of fighting journalism, to the temptation to that picture-writing which is best understood of the multitude, to the tendency towards an excess of emphasis which has ever since been, perhaps, the predominant defect of my writings and speeches, and which is all but inevitable in a country where strong language is the only weapon available. The writings of *United Ireland* purported only to be to literature what a bugle-charge in the midst of the battle is to music. The bugle-charge, at least, was heard in every corner of the island, and set the heart's blood of the young and brave a-tingling in an entirely satisfactory manner.

My arrest caused me only one real pang. My mother was already so broken that this new blow made one shudder to think of the consequences.

My poor company was the last ray of light the world contained for her. The way to Kilmainham passed our lodgings, and I begged of my escort to let me stop to break the news to her. Their orders were imperative. There was a ridiculous panic at the Castle as to the danger of a crowd collecting. They were to drive to the prison by a different route. This act of inhumanity, as will be seen, was soon repaired, and the poor wretches of detectives looked so cast down at a piece of brutality which was none of their choice, that when we arrived at the prison gate I could not resist the temptation to pay the cabman, as being the only civility it was in my power to offer them.

I was mercilessly chaffed by my brother-prisoners on my unique feat of tipping my captors for driving me to prison ; but I have always had a sneaking compassion for the native underlings in England's service—those poor shamefaced “good Master Huberts,” whose poverty, and not their natural blood, consents to do the Castle's torturing work in Dublin, as in the Northampton of King John. In the course of a life which has brought me into fiercer collision than, perhaps, any other Irishman of this generation, with the principals, Liberal as well as Tory, in the Government of Ireland, it has never once happened to me, in wild scenes of conflict, in police charges and physical encounters, in court-houses, on the platforms of proclaimed meetings, or in the depths of prisons, to fall into any bitter



personal quarrel with any policeman, subordinate official, or prison warder of them all.

Parnell's first greeting to me, as I entered the prison yard, was characteristic, and dispelled my dreams of a haven of rest.

"O'Brien, of all the men in the world, you are the man we wanted," he said ; and with the chuckle with which he always passed off a quotation, as if it were a successful joke : "*Deus nobis haec otia fecit !*"

And he begged of me during the dinner-hour to draft a No-Rent Manifesto.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE NO-RENT MANIFESTO

OCT. 18TH, 1881—MAY 2ND, 1882

AFTER Forster's colossal blunder in producing the No-Rent Movement by arresting Parnell, it was a minor, although not unamusing commentary on his wisdom, that he should have committed me to jail for the purpose of composing the No-Rent Manifesto, and collected the scattered Executive of the Land League there for the purpose of deliberating thereupon. I was furnished with the stump of a pencil and the back of a pink telegram with which to perform my task, during the dinner-hour, when the warders are set free for more appetising work than espionage and leave the locked cells as peaceful as a range of tombs.

An incident which occurred before the dinner-bell sounded all but incapacitated me for my task for that day. My mother had struggled up to the prison to visit me. I think the fact that we could only see one another from behind two gratings, with a warder standing in the space between, had a

good deal to do with impressing her unduly with the terrors of my imprisonment, in which her own illness and immeasurable loneliness were wholly forgotten. It seemed to me as if the gratings represented a space of years of separation between us. I realised with a shock, as I did not in the least realise when we met a few hours before, the ravages of the fatal malady : the sweet and noble face fallen away to a mere framework of transparent ivory ; the eyes, brave and steady, but of an inexpressible sadness, straining pathetically out of the gloom made by her mourning dress, broken only by the bands of silver hair. There was not a complaining word ; it would have been an infinite relief if there had been anything merely commonplace to break the perfectly heart-breaking muteness of her grief. Under the influence of some nervous recklessness, I did my best to laugh away her fears with some boisterous pleasantries, near enough to tears. When she was gone, I cursed a flippancy which might well have jarred upon a sacred grief, and, I am not ashamed to avow, burst out crying as soon as the lock was turned in my cell door—the first time for fifteen years I had been able to taste of the luxury, and the last time up to the hour I write.

It was in this mood I sat down to write a document on which so much was to depend. Once goaded into my task, however, I wrote on, as was my wont, with my head in the tropics and my feet in a polar-circle ; and by the time the warder made



his round for the dinner tins, I had covered the back of the telegram and whatever space remained vacant on the front of it with the text of the Declaration of War which was to decide Forster's fate as a statesman, and much else besides. Dr. Joe Kenny, whom, after St. Paul's faithful companion, we used to call "the beloved physician," and whom his friend Adams, in one of his sallies as a "chartered libertine," used to stigmatise as "that mad Fenian apothecary," was the assiduous and (needless to say to any one who knew him) unfee'd medical attendant of the Kilmainham prisoners, until he became one of the Kilmainham prisoners himself, and, indeed, afterwards. He had effected an arrangement with the prison authorities by which six or eight of us were concentrated in the hospital wing of the prison. After a time we were allowed to move about freely, and even to mess together in the room which, so long as a stone stands upon a stone of Kilmainham, will be known as "Mr. Parnell's room." Here Messrs. Parnell, O'Kelly, Dillon, Brennan, Kenny, Kettle, and myself met in the afternoon to debate the No-Rent Manifesto. Quite after his character of a man of action, Parnell, who had resisted firmly the resort to extreme measures so long as an experimental test of the Act was still possible, was now the most resolute for their adoption. No less characteristically, some, who in their revolutionary zeal would have killed off Gladstone's Land Act from

its birth, now hesitated at the call for an immediate decision. It is highly probable that there was a note of personal resentment at his arrest in Parnell's determination to retaliate with a No-Rent Movement, as there was no less probably on Gladstone's part when he directed the arrest of the strategist he had failed to answer otherwise.

His imprisonment had hurt Parnell's pride to a degree that made reprisals sweet to him. But his ruling motive in passing the word for the No-Rent War assuredly was that the removal of every man who could give effect to his own policy left him no alternative except to accept the ignominious extinction of the Land League without striking a blow, and thus leave the country unconditionally at the mercy of a confessedly defective Act in the hands of weak or hostile administrators. Also, he seemed considerably impressed by an argument which I did not fail to present to him, that the country had been so long taught to regard a No-Rent movement as practicable and irresistible, that, if it were not tested now under every possible circumstance of justification and of high and indignant National spirit to sustain it, the conclusion would be that a matchless opportunity had been lost; and woe to the Irish leader with whom the white feather is discovered, or even suspected! Parnell was not in the least afraid to be thought afraid, but he understood the practical bearing of the argument. He did not believe that the advice

to the Irish tenants to endure evictions rather than pay their rents would be generally obeyed.<sup>1</sup> But he anticipated that it would be obeyed on a sufficient scale to exercise upon the new Land Courts the same wholesome influence as the test cases, and to make the government of the country by Forster's ruthless coercive methods impossible. Events so abundantly justified his calculation that he, over whose committal to Kilmainham Prison the worthy common councilmen of the London Guildhall shouted as over a fallen and beaten man, quitted Kilmainham as a conqueror over the body of his fallen and beaten jailer.

The No-Rent Manifesto was unquestionably, in spirit and in language, the product of a country in full revolution. Its doctrines, however, were rather more constitutional than the measures of the Government it was aimed against. It did not preach the repudia-

<sup>1</sup> In after years, when Lord Ashbourne's first Purchase Act was under discussion, Parnell startled the House of Commons with one of his bursts of candour, which would be put down to cynicism if they were not still more suggestive of fearless truth-telling. The House was agitated by the contention that, if England advanced the Irish peasants money for the purchase of their holdings, they would take the first opportunity of repudiating their annuities after the manner of the No-Rent Manifesto. "The House need have no alarm about that," said Parnell in his tranquil way. "I gave the Irish farmers the greatest opportunity they ever had, or will ever have, of refusing to pay their rents. They never will have such a chance again. They did not obey me then, and they will never obey me or anybody else on that point." The House seemed puzzled whether to be shocked or reassured; but Parnell's plain speaking conquered. All hesitation as to the safety of State advances in Ireland was at an end; and Parliament has now, without uneasiness, provided funds to buy out the whole soil of Ireland.



tion of rent, but only the withholding of it until the people and their leaders were again placed in a position to exercise their constitutional right of free speech and free combination. It was, in fact, the rough old Saxon resource of refusing supplies pending the redress of grievances ; with the difference that the supplies were to be withheld not from the Crown, but from the class in whose interest the combination of the Land League had been strangled.

"The crisis with which we are face to face," the Manifesto declares, "is not of our making. It has been deliberately forced upon the country, while the Land Act is as yet untested, in order to strike down the only power which could have extorted any solid benefits for the farmers of Ireland from that Act, and to leave them once more helplessly at the mercy of a law invented to save Landlordism and administered by landlord minions."

It was recalled that the Executive of the League was steadily advancing in the preparations to test how far the Act could be trusted to secure to the tenants the value of their own improvements, and reduce the Irish rental to a figure that would place the country beyond the peril of periodical famine ; or if the Act failed under the test, to preserve to the people the power of their own organisation. It was this attitude of strict legality and provoking self-command that moved a disappointed English Minister to plunge into an open reign of terror, in order to destroy by foul means an organisation which was confessedly too strong for him, so long

as he retained a shadow of respect for England's own Constitution.

In the face of provocations which might have turned men's blood to flame, the Executive of the Land League adhered calmly to the course traced out for them by the National Convention. Test cases of a varied and searching character were, with great labour, put in train for adjudication in the Land Courts. Even the arrest of our President, Mr. Charles Stewart Parnell, and the excited state of popular feeling which it evoked, did not induce the Executive to swerve in the slightest from that course ; for Mr. Parnell's arrest might have been accounted for by motives of personal malice, and his removal did not altogether derange the machinery for the preparation of the test cases, which he had been at much pains to perfect. But the events which have since occurred—the seizure, or attempted seizure, of almost all the members of the Executive and of the chief officials of the League upon wild and preposterous pretences, and the vilest suppression of free speech—place it beyond any possibility of doubt that the English Government, unable constitutionally to declare the Land League an illegal association, defeated in the attempt to break its unity, and afraid to abide the result of test cases watched over by a powerful popular organisation, has deliberately resolved to destroy the whole machinery of the Central League, with a view to rendering an experimental trial of the Act impossible, and forcing it upon the Irish tenant farmers on the Government's own terms. . . . One constitutional weapon alone now remains in the hands of the Irish National Land League. It is the strongest, the swiftest, the most irresistible of all. We hesitated to advise our fellow-countrymen to employ it, until the savage lawlessness of the English Government provoked a crisis in which we must either consent to see the Irish tenant farmers disarmed of their organisation and laid once more prostrate

at the feet of the landlords, and every murmur of Irish public opinion suppressed with an armed hand, or appeal to our countrymen to resort at once to the only means now left in their hands of bringing this false and brutal Government to its senses. Fellow-countrymen, the hour to try your souls and to redeem your pledges has arrived. The Executive of the National Land League, forced to abandon the policy of testing the Land Act, feels bound to advise the tenant farmers of Ireland from this forth to pay No Rent, under any circumstances, to the landlords, until the Government relinquishes the existing system of terrorism, and restores the constitutional rights of the people.

The sword once drawn, the scabbard was thrown away. All the dangers to be affronted—intensified coercion, wholesale eviction, martial law—were unflinchingly taken into consideration.

Do not be daunted by the removal of your leaders. Your fathers abolished tithes by the same methods, without any leaders at all. Do not suffer yourselves to be intimidated by threats of military violence. Against the passive resistance of an entire population military power has no weapons. Do not be wheedled into compromise of any sort by the dread of eviction. They can no more evict a whole nation than they can imprison them. . . . Stand passively, firmly, fearlessly by while the armies of England may be engaged in their hopeless struggle against a spirit which their weapons cannot touch.

One of the great London papers the next morning declared it to be "the most audacious document ever penned." The passage which, above all others, moved English indignation was the doctrine that "It is as lawful to refuse to pay rents as it is to receive them"; and no doubt it was the unexplained



daring of this claim which was the weak spot of the Manifesto, and seemed to make its ethical condemnation inevitable. But the error was really one of technicalities rather than of morals. The Irish tenants were in law obliged to give six months' notice before getting rid of their liability to pay rent. This preliminary notice once given, the doctrine which, thus crudely stated, presented itself to the uninformed English mind as unabashed dishonesty, would have fulfilled every condition of legality, as well as morality, in the case of tenants who might be ready to incur the penalty of eviction from the lands thus thrown on the landlords' hands. In Ireland the Manifesto was received with the ominous silence which precedes great natural convulsions. It was officially read at the next (and last) meeting of the Central League. The meeting then adjourned without debate, with the knowledge that *qua* Land League they were never to re-assemble. That night's *Dublin Gazette* proclaimed and suppressed the Land League as an unlawful and criminal association. A more serious blow than any from the Castle was the immediate and emphatic condemnation of the No-Rent Movement by Archbishop Croke. We had none of us anticipated that the Bishops would be able to identify themselves with doctrines of questionable theology and of undeniable revolutionary violence. No people on earth more cheerfully than the Irish people accept ecclesiastical reproof in public affairs, when they feel that the

counsels of perfection come from a loving Irish heart, and none have a prettier way of keeping respectfully never-minding them. Nevertheless, that the blow should come from the man of all others who had stood up against the inborn conservatism of his order, and should be delivered with an impulsive haste at a moment when the National leaders were contending against all the despotic force of a great Empire, and when the very heavens seemed to be breaking up and falling on their heads, was, to the most ardent of Dr. Croke's worshippers, a somewhat staggering experience. But everybody recognised—and nobody with more readiness than Parnell—that Dr. Croke evinced a high moral courage in breasting the storm of unpopularity that was sure to follow, in order to proclaim his own perhaps exaggerated apprehensions for his people, and for the movement. When the English newspapers, with their customary adroitness, did him the wrong of misinterpreting his friendly warning, and announced that his letter was the signal for a campaign for the destruction of Parnell's power, the Archbishop replied with his own breezy roughness to the insulting suggestion that "it never entered my head to represent myself as a past or possible leader. I follow when I can, and, when I cannot, I dissent and disappear."

In a state of the highest elation at this unexpected aid to his arms, the Chief Secretary proceeded to strike quick and hard. On the following Sunday, Resident Magistrates and police officers, backed by

troops of cavalry and companies of foot-soldiers, in all the principal centres, burst into the meeting-places of the fifteen hundred Branches of the League, broke up the meetings, seized the books, bullied the unarmed people, and unceremoniously arrested all who said them nay. In only two instances did they succeed in goading the people into any semblance of resistance. In one of these cases a man was run through the heart in a bayonet charge in Ballyragget, and in the other case a volley of thirty-four rounds of buckshot was fired into a crowd in the hunger-stricken district of Erris in Mayo, and a woman fell dead and two others were mortally wounded. Within the following week the principal men of the League—professional men, mayors, Members of Parliament, newspaper editors, shopkeepers, farmers—were snapped up in hundreds, until the jails of Kilmainham, Naas, Dundalk, Kilkenny, Galway, Limerick, Clonmel, Derry, Armagh, and Enniskillen were filled with suspects. To fill the Castle's cup of joy to overflowing, the Dublin Corporation refused the freedom of the city to Messrs. Parnell and Dillon by the casting-vote of the Lord Mayor, who was rewarded with a knighthood. Alas for the vanities of human prophecy! "Believe me, it is a hopeful sign!" cried the impulsive Gladstone. "Believe me, what Dublin did yesterday, Ireland will do to-morrow!" What Dublin did "to-morrow" was to wipe out the Lord Mayor and all who followed him, and make Messrs. Parnell and Dillon freemen by an almost



unanimous vote ; and what Ireland did was what Gladstone himself also did "to-morrow," namely, to cry "Bravo !" and extinguish not merely the offending Lord Mayor, but the offending Chief Secretary. But who could have foreseen it all in Forster's first months of honey as the strong man triumphant ? It seemed the easiest of victories. Forster, little heeding the lesson of history, that Ireland is never less conquered than when she seems most so, was supremely content with the results of his vigour. He had made good the lucklessly graphic boast of his Lord-Lieutenant, Earl Cowper. He had "succeeded in driving discontent under the surface," and founding the conspiracy of the Invincibles.

By stamping out harmless village meetings as though they were insurrections, he simply turned the League Branches into so many secret societies, from which the moderating influence of the quieter and more staid members of the community was henceforth missing. The spice of mystery always dear to the Irish imagination invested the illegal meetings of the Branches with a new charm. The work of eluding the police and trampling on their proclamations became the first duty of Irish wit and of Irish manhood. But there arose a more sinister phenomenon. Those who had all along disliked constitutional agitation found it safer to appear with masked faces, and in the midnight, and trust to their firearms for arguments, than to expose themselves helplessly to be maltreated and subjected to pro-

longed imprisonment at the whim of any policeman who chose to suspect them,<sup>1</sup> by holding fugitive meetings, and delivering snatches of interrupted speeches. By degrees the suspicious calm began to be rudely broken. It leaked out that five hundred of Lord Arran's tenants in Mayo had resolved to withhold their rents; so did Lord Ventry's Kerry tenantry; so did Lord Leconfield's in Clare, Lord Massereene's in Louth, Lord Athlumney's in Meath; and so did the tenants of pretty nearly all the estates in the stiff-necked county of Wexford, almost every man of whom, I am thankful to say, time has justified in making him the proprietor of his own holding. More perplexingly still, the mass of the tenants neither met nor debated nor resolved upon anything, except holding their tongues and leaving

<sup>1</sup> An illustration of this view of things, which, but for the barbarity of the subject, would have its amusing side, came under my own notice. Among the highly respectable farmers and business men who constituted nine-tenths of the Kilmainham "suspects," there was one giant whom rumour darkly connected with the exploits of a Southern Ribbon Lodge, whose mode of warfare was to cut off the ear of an offending bailiff or land-grabber. One morning a group of the prisoners stood in the prison-yard, discussing a raid by Mr. Clifford Lloyd, R.M., on a peaceful town in the West, where he occupied both ends of the town with a military force, and then proceeded to arrest as "suspects" several scores of the principal shopkeepers, and charged with bayonets into a crowd that dared to raise a cheer for the prisoners. The Moonlight Captain, who was a taciturn man and usually stood apart, was suddenly moved by the recital. He cast his wideawake hat on the ground and trampled on it in an impotent fury, crying out, "Be cripes! I always knew there was nothing for it with these fellows but the cheers!" (which was his way of pronouncing the "shears" used in his midnight raids). Mr. Clifford Lloyd had triumphantly vindicated the policy of "the cheers" of the Kerry moonlighters.

the Rent Offices empty. Most of the male part of the congregation rose up and quitted Archbishop M'Cabe's Cathedral when his Grace's pastoral, denouncing the No-Rent Manifesto as Communism, and anathematising the National leaders in violent terms, was read. The landlords, for whom fox-hunting was all that the arena was for Nero, found their passage across the farmers' lands forbidden by crowds of peasants, and were forced to turn home disconsolate with their hounds. If the crowbars of the evicting parties sent their terrors day after day to the peasants' hearts, Captain Moonlight and his murder clubs began again to walk the night. To crown the Chief Secretary's discomforts, the Ladies' Land League developed a power and an indomitable spirit compared with which it was child's-play to make war on their fathers and brothers.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Forster after-

<sup>1</sup> The President of the Ladies' League, Mrs. Deane, a niece of John Blake Dillon, and the head of the oldest commercial establishment in the West—who, to the deep regret of half a province, has passed away since these lines were written—was one of those women of remarkable intellectual grasp and governing power, combined with tender sympathy, who might have been the *Mère Chantal* of an Irish Annecy or the *Mère Angélique* of an Irish Port Royal. Another of the matrons of exquisite domestic charm, who did not shrink from identifying herself with the movement, even under the fire of Archbishop M'Cabe's cruel reproofs, was Mrs. A. M. Sullivan, the wife of the famous orator, whom destiny compelled to abandon his shining place in Parliament at this interesting moment in order to devote himself to the Bar, and whom a further stroke of destiny deprived of his life, just when his success at the Bar gave him the hope of re-entering the political arena. But the true militant leader of the Ladies' Land League, its inspiration and guiding force in action, was Miss Anna Parnell, a sister of the Irish leader, who, it is not too much to say, was, in more than one respect, little removed in genius from her brother.



wards sought a revenge worthy of the brutal sex, when taunted with his failure to suppress the Ladies' Land League, by crying, "Yes, indeed, suppress ladies who were obliging me by wasting the Land League funds at the rate of £1500 a week!" The gibe was, however, a very thin and spiteful disguise of the fact that he did make a very savage attempt indeed to frighten the Ladies' League, and did actually subject some of the youngest and most refined of them to the worst humiliations of imprisonment under a vile Statute of Edward the Third, directed against "persons of evil fame"; and that the reply of the ladies was to hold a simultaneous meeting on a given Sunday in fifteen hundred parishes in the country, at which they proffered unfortunate Mr. Forster every possible invitation, in vain, to carry out his threats. One of the young ladies arrested described in a happy quotation—

When she will, she will, you may depend on't;  
And when she won't, she won't—and there's an end on't!—

Mr. Forster's ludicrous as well as impossible task of arguing by means of imprisonment or buckshot with some thousands of devoted women, who set themselves systematically to give effect to the No-Rent Manifesto by a combination of the modesty of a Sister of Charity and the heroism of a Boadicea.

## CHAPTER XVI

### A NEWSPAPER'S FIGHT FOR LIFE

1881-1882

It was another of the singularities of the Forsterian tragi-comedy, that I was able throughout the No-Rent movement to supply the journalistic stimulus and direction of the movement weekly from within the walls of Kilmainham Jail; and that, while he was pursuing *United Ireland* in a fever from city to city of Ireland and of Great Britain, in at least ten of which it was published in turn, the writer of almost the whole of the perilous stuff that so weighed upon his bosom was all the time in his own custody. *United Ireland* was now the only visible emblem, the flag, of the outlawed League. There were two more or less justifiable ways of making war upon it—either by a prosecution of those of us who were legally responsible for the publication, or by the strong hand, smashing the types and locking up the concern. Mr. Forster's method had neither the legality of the one course nor the virile tyranny of the other to recommend it. He never openly



Francis J. J. Cook, Photo.

Emory Nathan Photo.

Like i' Brin





suppressed the paper. He contented himself with throwing into prison everybody he suspected, either of writing for it, or of earning a mechanic wage by setting up its types, or tending its machines, or furnishing its accounts ; and he kept a regiment of policemen employed for three or four months in breaking into the shops of the agents who exposed its placards, and chasing for their lives through the streets the small boys who sold it. It was the *reductio ad absurdum* of squalid unconstitutionality. Mr. William O'Donovan, son of the illustrious Gaelic scholar, and brother of the scarcely less famous war-correspondent, Mr. Edward O'Donovan, took my place as editor after my arrest. Before a fortnight, he was warned by a friend in the Secret Police that the Chief Secretary had signed a warrant for his arrest. He had barely time to escape to France before the Castle goshawks made their swoop. A fortnight afterwards, Mr. J. Bryce Killen, barrister, who succeeded him, was carried off to Dundalk Jail. The following week, his successor, Mr. James O'Connor, the sub-editor, joined me in Kilmainham. Mr. Arthur O'Keefe, the assistant sub-editor, who next stepped into the breach, was arrested a week afterwards. Next the commercial manager was arrested, and after him his two office clerks ; next came warrants for the foreman printer, his sub-foreman, and one of his compositors ; and finally the very machinist, in his grimy blouse, was "reasonably suspected of treasonable practices," and sent to swell the

ranks of the prisoners in Kilmainham. From that time forth, *United Ireland* published weekly, in the place of its leading article, a black list of the casualties among its staff, which is probably unique in the history of the Press of these countries :—

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IN IRELAND IN 1882

William O'Brien, editor of *United Ireland*; arrested October 20th, 1881; Kilmainham Jail.

William O'Donovan, literary contributor; warrant filled for his arrest; escaped November 15th, 1881.

James Bryce Killen, B.L., literary contributor; arrested November 29th, 1881; Dundalk Jail.

Michael A. Whelan, cashier; arrested December 6th, 1881; Kilmainham Jail.

James O'Connor, sub-editor; arrested December 8th, 1881; Kilmainham Jail.

Florence O'Keefe, business manager; warrant for his arrest; escaped December 8th, 1881.

Edward Donnelly, foreman printer; warrant for his arrest; escaped December 8th, 1881.

Arthur O'Keefe, assistant sub-editor; arrested December 15th, 1881; Kilmainham Jail.

Henry Burton, office clerk; arrested December 15th, 1881; Kilmainham Jail.

William M'Donnell, assistant foreman printer; warrant for his arrest; escaped December 15th, 1881.

William Hunt, book-keeper; arrested December 23rd, 1881; Kilmainham Jail.

Mathew Reilly, chief machinist; arrested December 28th, 1881; Kilmainham Jail.

Thomas Duggan, agent, Loughrea; arrested December 28th, 1881; Kilmainham Jail.

John Haltigan, compositor; arrested January 3rd, 1882; Dundalk Jail.



It seems never once to have occurred to the Chief Secretary that the enemy against whom he was wildly flinging about his warrants was all the time doing his work from his own jail. My brother-prisoners included representatives from every county in the south, east, and west of Ireland. They were all allowed to receive their local newspapers. As the *Freeman* naturally shrank from publishing news as to the progress of the No-Rent struggle, it became a matter of prime importance to encourage the country by supplying it with the fullest possible information as to the extent and vigour of the National resistance. My plan was to collect from each of the suspects his own local paper, together with their private letters, received by subterranean agencies, giving particulars not otherwise attainable. In this way my cell was converted into an information bureau, from which I was able weekly to dispatch many columns of exciting details, and many columns more of pungent comments, so that the paper, amidst all the crash and chaos in its editorial rooms, its printing staff, and its machinery room, became a more formidable foe, and the object of a stronger public interest than ever. And it is worth while mentioning, as a commentary on the Chief Secretary's spiteful arrest of Dr. Kenny, and dismissal of him by sealed order from his office in the Poor Law service, on suspicion that he conveyed the No-Rent Manifesto out of Kilmainham Prison, that I was never without a choice of half-

a-dozen different modes of conveying my messages to the outer world, uncensored by the Governor's eye. The Ladies' Land League gave Forster an additional grudge against their body, by drafting a body of sweet girl graduates into *United Ireland* office to take the place of the outlawed men; and most unselfishly and valiantly, for several months, they kept its accounts, and supplied some of its most piquant writings, and foiled the police raiders by a thousand ingenious feminine devices for circulating the paper.

Even Mr. Forster was not long in discovering that his policy of kidnapping and pin-pricking and petty larceny had but doubled the prestige of *United Ireland* as a missionary of the No-Rent Manifesto. He made up his mind to a more heroic stroke. In Christmas week a party of police burst into the office without even going through the formality of presenting a warrant, seized every copy of *United Ireland* they could lay their hands on, stopped the machines, broke up the formes and stereo-plates, and put an end to any means of producing the paper again on the premises. Then commenced perhaps the most extraordinary running fight that a newspaper ever before or since maintained for its life. The escaped foreman printer, Mr. Donnelly, had made his preparations for the emergency, and *United Ireland* made its appearance punctually the next week from London. Scotland Yard frightened the London printers after a few weeks with the

threat of a prosecution. The paper turned up imperturbably, in the American phrase, "on time" from Liverpool. The Liverpool printers and stereotypers in their turn found their premises haunted by detectives and their customers dogged about the streets. When these measures were not found sufficiently intimidatory, the worthy Englishmen were frightened in earnest by a formal prosecution for sedition. Glasgow carried us over one perilous week, "and then no more." Manchester was Mr. Donnelly's next headquarters; but it was no longer possible to get your prosy English man of business to face the fire, before which the sentimental Irishman felt the joy of battle. By the end of January, the remnants of our exiled staff—"few and faint, but fearless still"—found themselves installed in the Imprimerie Schiller, in the Rue du Faubourg Montmartre in Paris, and thence they dispatched punctually for several months, in its quaint French dress, a *United Ireland* more vivacious and defiant than ever, to keep the wits of the Irish police in a weekly state of delirium, and be handed round from Irish cabin to cabin as tenderly as the French officers whom they used to shelter in the old wars of Boney.

It was difficult enough for me to keep up my supply of news and leading articles to a journal whirled about on this extraordinary Odyssey; but my labour was soon complicated by finding that there were two separate editions of *United Ireland*



in course of production—one of them of a humbler and more makeshift character, which was printed here and there in the Irish cities, as a precaution against the seizure of the French edition at the ports. For several weeks I had to supply a double editorial budget to their several destinations ; but, indeed, in whatever city a publication had to be organised at a few days' notice, there were always volunteers at hand to write for it, to arrange for its circulation, and to take the risk of assisting in its mad adventures. Stephano was not more perplexed by the "strange noises" of the tricky spirit of Prospero's isle than was Forster by the mysterious visitations of this unseizable newspaper. One of the chief diversions of Dublin during these sad months was the weekly battle in the streets between the gigantic Metropolitan policemen and the ragged newspaper boys, inside whose rags there were always concealed a few copies of the outlawed journal, and who found ample compensation for the very gross brutality with which they themselves were cuffed and their property confiscated by the pursuing policemen, in the prices of 1s., or even 2s. 6d., they obtained for any copies that successfully ran the blockade, and indeed, profit or loss apart, in the Irish urchin's sempiternal joy in eluding the grasp and whistling "Harvey Duff" in the ears of their huge, breathless pursuers. Sometimes the Chief Secretary had his victory, as when the whole of the first Paris edition was seized at Folkestone, before

Mr. Donnelly had hit upon more ingenious continental methods; and when, on another occasion, 30,000 copies were seized on arrival at the North Wall, stowed away in flour barrels. It was very seldom, however, that Forster had the best of the encounter of wits with the Ladies' Land League, who had charge of the circulation of the paper. One of the most common channels of circulation was by means of boxes of millinery, despatched to sympathising friends in the trade. There is even reason to suspect that, after the manner of carrying contraband writings across the French frontier under the Empire, the fugitive journal was not without its obligations to the petticoats of the emissaries of the Ladies' Land League, travelling through the country *en mission*. We were in negotiation with the skipper of a Boulogne fishing-boat for delivering the Paris edition weekly under cover of the French fishing-fleet, which hovers about the Cork coast in the spring and summer, when the word went out that the long war was over, and that, after the six months' duel, it was the newspaper, and not the Chief Secretary, that proved to be the survivor.

The period of repose, in the hope of which I welcomed the cells of Kilmainham, proved thus to be one of the most laboriously active passages of a pretty active life. But it was sweetened by an exhilaration of combat and a companionship with revered and trusty men, and, it must be added, a

rugged courtesy on the part of our captor, which leave me scarcely a single memory of those six prison months that it is not a personal luxury to recall. I brought to Kilmainham perhaps as unlimited a store of faith in human nature, of admiration for goodness, courage, and capacity, wherever and in whatever varying phases it was to be found, and of incapacity to see the base side or the sceptical side of men, or movements, as, I think, most men are blessed with. If such a disposition in a world of cross purposes, and especially in an Irish world of excessive expectation and excessive disappointment, is only too sure to bring its crop of disillusion, the only change of which even the experiences of two Irish civil wars has made me conscious is the substitution for an unlimited belief in human nature of an unlimited pity for the inexorable destiny of us all. If to know one is to live with one, to live with one within prison walls daily for six months ought to leave little for experience to discover ; and I can say with a very clear conscience as to the men with whom it was my privilege to be in daily, almost hourly, contact during all these months of trial, that I left Kilmainham with a higher admiration, affection, and, it might well be said, reverence for them all than even the plentiful stock I had begun with. Mr. Forster's prison arrangements were unquestionably humane. All the prisoners were allowed to mingle together freely in the prison yards during the abundant



hours of exercise ; to smoke their pipes, to read their newspapers, to play at hand-ball, or, if their tastes were more sedentary, at chess or dominoes, and to have their meals supplied by a friendly restaurateur (or, as it happened, restaurateuse). The following extract will give some notion of the lengths to which indulgence was once in a way pushed :—

### ST. PATRICK'S DAY IN DUNDALK JAIL<sup>1</sup>

The National festival was celebrated by the Suspects in Dundalk Jail with great enthusiasm. After dinner, Alderman Mangan of Drogheda was moved to the chair. The toast, "The Day we Celebrate," was proposed by Mr. Synott of Manorhamilton, and responded to by Mr. D. M'Sweeney of Falcarragh, Co. Donegal. The topics dwelt upon were the unfaltering adherence of the Irish people to their ancient faith, and their inflexible steadiness to the principle of Irish Nationality. Mr. J. M'Morrow of Doura, Co. Leitrim, proposed the next toast, "The Irish Nation," to which Mr. J. M. Hubon of Loughrea responded in forcible terms. The remaining toasts—"The extirpation of Landlordism" and "The Ladies' Land League"—were spoken to by Mr. Th. M'Grath and Mr. Dineen, Ballylanders, Co. Limerick ; Mr. M. J. Codd of Mount-rath ; Mr. J. W. Finn, Inchicore, Dublin ; Mr. George O'Toole, Mr. Mullet, Mr. Dorris, Mr. O'Dowd, and other Suspects. During the day several songs and recitations of a National character were given ; and while the celebrations went on inside the prison, outside the Dundalk and Drogheda bands were marching and counter-marching to the enlivening strains of their own excellent music.

My own Christmas in Kilmainham was of a more

<sup>1</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, March 21st, 1882.

mixed, though scarcely less indulgent character. I was ill in bed, and had to undergo a not very serious surgical operation, which was performed by two of my brother-prisoners, Dr. Kenny and Dr. Cardiff of Wexford. The latter, a man of enormous size and girth, with the strong friendships and the uncompromising hatreds of the sturdy Wexford breed he sprang from, held his own knife over me with the threat to use it if I cried out, while Dr. Kenny's gentler hand made the necessary incisions; and my terror of Dr. Cardiff's disapproval, rather than of his knife, kept me in a state of satisfactory subjection.<sup>1</sup> But this was soon over. "The boys" were, as a special favour, admitted to my room, where there were toasts and songs and speeches, more joyous, I dare swear, than the Christmas dinner of the luckless Chief Secretary in his Lodge in the Phoenix Park, tearing his hair over the war despatches of his prancing police satraps.

There came soon after an episode which makes me never think of Mr. Forster's name without tenderness, for all his tragic blunders. My mother was unable to struggle up to the prison after her first

<sup>1</sup> Once a boycotted prisoner, who "signed conditions" to obtain his release, and was re-arrested shortly afterwards, fainted in the exercise yard, and the "suspects," lately so careful to avoid his company, flocked around him with anxious faces. Dr. Cardiff continued to stride around the prison yard in stern aloofness. "Quick, quick, Dr. Cardiff," cried a warder, rushing up to him, "Mr. — is dying!" "Let him die and be damned," was the reply of the savage old Spartan, who, "questions of principle" apart, was one of the kindest-hearted of mortals, grimly going on his way.

visit. She had been removed by kind friends to the Hospice for the Dying at Harold's Cross, where the angelic affection of the Sisters of Charity made her room an antechamber of heaven. One morning, when all hope of seeing her again seemed to be lost, Captain Barlow, the Prison Inspector, arrived with a special order from the Chief Secretary that I was to be at liberty to go out with the Governor of the Prison to visit my mother, if I gave my word of honour not to attempt to escape. I stumbled through some words of gratitude for Mr. Forster's generous offer, but said I was sure he would not misunderstand me if I suggested that, in the existing state of things, I could neither ask nor receive a favour from him. Captain Barlow made the just reply, "It is not a matter of favour to you, it is a matter of humanity"; and I asked to be allowed to consult my friends, who with one voice put an end to any political scruple.

Thereupon began a series of singular experiences, repeated from time to time for months. The Governor of the Prison would accompany me on an outside car to the Hospice, and ask me at what hour he was to return; and after three or four hours by my mother's bedside, Captain Denehy would duly return with his outside car to reclaim his prisoner. On our first trip, visions of a rescue more or less haunted the mind of Captain Denehy, who was a simple-minded gentleman, full of an old-fashioned courtesy for his prisoners; but he soon got rid of



any apprehension of that sort, and came to enjoy the unexpected holiday so much, that he was always the first to ask me when I would make another visit. I shrink from dwelling upon all that these visits meant for the poor sufferer and for myself. Nor would it be easy to find words delicate enough to express my eternal gratitude to the Sisters, upon whose affection their patient had so gained, that they flocked about her bed like as many radiant spiritual children around their mother. But even my respect for the holy reserve that veils those noble women from the world—a reserve that does not debar them from visiting the lowliest of the lowly in the worst slums of Dublin, and yet surrounds them there with a simple majesty more awe-inspiring than that of queens—must not prevent me from mentioning that I owe to these visits to the Hospice the most sacred friendship of my life. It is that of a Sister of Charity about whom alone a great book might be written—whose name is music in the garrets of the Dublin poor—who of the match-sellers and flower-girls of the streets has made adoring friends and mothers of happy households, and from a higher stratum of spotless Irish girls has furnished forth bands of missionary nuns, who bless her name in a hundred convents, hospitals, and lazarettos of America and Australia, of China and Hindostan, and Denmark, Norway, and South Africa. If one may dare to say so, Sister Mary Eustace is an international institution—happily for the English

name, for she is an Englishwoman, whose genius for organisation, unsleeping energy and steadfastness, as unchangeable as that of the Northern Star, have done more to make the English character respected in Dublin than has been done by eight centuries of English governors and garrisons in the Castle ; and still more happily for our own island conceits, for this Englishwoman of birth, who has come to know the Irish character in all its depths and in its least lovely surroundings, has seen enough to be one of the most ardent of those of her country in every century who, once in contact with the enchanting Irish nature, have become *Hibernis ipsis Hiberniores*.

The experiment of temporary release on parole, once tried, became general ; and, with more humanity than logic, Mr. Forster trusted the "dissolute ruffians and village tyrants" of his speeches, on their word of honour, to quit his prisons to visit their sick friends, to dig their potatoes, or even to attend an important cattle fair, and then return on the appointed day to their captivity. The word of honour, it is scarcely necessary to add, was never broken. The question has often been debated whether Mr. Forster by the lenity, or Mr. Balfour by the harshness of his prison regulations was the wiser in his generation. It is certain that it was the failure of the gentler Forsterian prison rules to effect the conquest of Ireland that excited Mr. Balfour to try the sharper effects of hunger and degradation on his prisoners. The impression likely to be made in three quarters—upon the prisoners,

upon the general Irish public, and upon the English public—had to be considered. Mr. Morley's book makes it clear that, with Gladstone's antipathy to coercion in its mildest form, neither he nor the best men of his party would have stood any attempt, by squalid personal humiliations, to break the spirit or the health of men who were imprisoned without trial, upon academic charges, upon the suspicion of any village policeman. I am willing to believe, moreover, that Mr. Forster was too just a man to lend himself to the experiment. So far as the effect upon the Irish people is concerned, it is quite certain that the indulgence extended to the prisoners diminished by at least one-half the indignation excited by their arrest. From the point of view of calming or stimulating public excitement, any one of the prison struggles between Mr. Balfour and his victims did more to madden public feeling, and make the name of "law and order" detestable, than the imprisonment of all Forster's thousand "suspects." Again, if the policy is to be judged by the effect upon the prisoners themselves, everybody who has seen the two systems at work will agree that Mr. Forster's comparative Capua was more dangerous to Irish *moral* than Mr. Balfour's arena of the wild beasts. No Nationalist worth his salt was other than braced by the privations and petty abominations of the later Coercion regime, while it was impossible to associate too much of the divine force of self-sacrifice with men who read their newspapers at



comfortable breakfasts, and whiled away the afternoon in the ball-alley or over a game of chess. The one aspect in which, as I think, Mr. Forster's prison regulations were otherwise than shrewd, from the governmental point of view, was his plan of collecting the suspects together in free intercourse, in a number of special jails, where, as in so many colleges of a National University, the best men from every part of the country met together and learned lessons of patriotism and of common purposes which nothing could ever afterwards obliterate from their memory. In all other respects, I have no doubt, humanity was also wisdom from the statesmanlike, and even from the coercionist, point of view.

There was, indeed, one element of serpentlike calculation mixed with Mr. Forster's dovelike prison arrangements. The exultant remark he let drop about the prodigal expenditure of the League funds by the Ladies' Land League lets out the secret. As the suspects were allowed to get in their meals from outside, the privilege cost the League funds £1 a week per suspect, and Forster had only to fill his jails with a sufficient number of prisoners to deplete the League exchequer by over £1000 a week, which was the figure the support of the prisoners had actually reached in the November of 1881. But there once more Mr. Forster challenged an encounter with an antagonist against whom he was but poorly matched. Parnell at once saw the game,

and with an unswerving instinct made his move. He passed the word through all the jails that the suspects, after a date named, would go back to prison fare, in order to spare the Land League funds the crushing burden of their support. Needless to say, he himself set the example. The food question was, indeed, with him at all times of a profound unconcern worthy of the traditional Irish contempt for "the dirty belly." It was the mechanically ingenious view of the prison fare question, as of most other things, that chiefly interested him. The prison fare included twice a week a lump of inferior beef per man, and Parnell conceived the project of pooling all our lumps of beef together in a common pot, from which, with the aid of broken bread and of the vegetables fished out of the prison soup of the previous day's dietary, he concocted a famous dish of Irish stew. He and Dr. Kenny collaborated in producing this curious mess, over which, I am afraid, we grimaced more than over the unadorned prison food, but which was to the cooks a source of never-failing joy and pride. Parnell's calculation that the country would not long stand the disgrace of leaving its soldiers to pine on prison fare was almost instantly justified. A National tribute of enormous dimensions was subscribed within a few weeks. Far from emptying the coffers of the League, Mr. Forster found he had but minted a new coinage of £50,000 or £60,000 for its treasury. Another droll result followed. The mass of the poorer

prisoners found that the prison fare mattered so little for the worse for them, that they decided to stick to it, and to lay up for their families the £1 a week which the new Fund allocated for the supply of the superior fare. The net result, therefore, of the Chief Secretary's ingenious strategy was that he both relieved the League Fund of a crushing charge and bestowed a pay of £1 a week apiece upon Parnell's household troops.

It has been mentioned that six or eight of us were lodged together in "a concentration camp," of which Parnell's room was the dining-room and the club-window. It has often been a matter of bitter regret that I took no notes of our *noctes coenaeque* around the Chief's frugal table. At the time and for many a year after, anything I might put in writing was liable to seizure and official scrutiny, with the unfortunate result that my diaries were kept mostly in uneventful periods when they were least useful. Not, indeed, that Parnell was in the smallest degree a professor of table-talk. He would have been the last to understand Dr. Johnson's passion for "talking for victory." He was much more truly an admirer of Biggar's immortal axiom of obstruction: "Never talk except in Government time." At table, as everywhere else, he was simple, genial, unpretentious. But he was in the habit of dropping pregnant sayings, for any record of which surer than my own memory I would now give much. It was a pleasant little company. Mr.



Dillon was a book-lover, well read in travels and biography, and a gentle and refined companion ; Mr. O'Kelly had a provoking way of never affording more than a glimpse of his treasures of romance, in connection with the Algerian and Mexican wars, but he ever loved to construct ingenious schemes of foreign complications, which would bring about the assured downfall of England—if they would only come off ; Dr. Kenny supplied the easy gaiety and cementing gift which make the social world go round ; and Mr. Brennan filled in the background with a certain air of mystery and reticence suggestive of the French Revolution without its noise. Our feasts were plain, but they sufficed. The farmers who at this time stopped the landlords from hunting, as a measure of reprisal, started "Land League hunts" of their own, and usually sent their bags by way of presents to the suspects. Hare soup, in consequence, became so frequent an item of our menu, that the dainty moved us to as ungrateful reflections as the "*toujours perdrix*" of the French royal epicure.

There was no subject on which Parnell better loved to chat than America and the American Revolution. He would delight to trace Washington through his constant retreats and devices for avoiding battle, holding that to his willingness to decamp and play an inglorious waiting-game it was due that the insurrection was not promptly suppressed by the troops. "Washington would be

a highly unpopular leader in Ireland," he would say, with a smile. For the United States of our day, bursting with youthful energy and rude strength, he had the admiration of one who was half American by blood and five-sixths in sympathy. He would always topple over Mr. O'Kelly's calculations of disaster to England from France or Russia with the observation: "Pooh! The United States are the only people that could smash England. They may even be the means of freeing Ireland without the smashing." Once somebody was speaking slightly of Robert Emmet's insurrection. "Emmet was not such a fool as many foolish people think," Parnell observed. "There was Napoleon with his Army of England cooling their heels at Boulogne. Any success in Ireland might have decided him to cross. Emmet's idea of striking at the Castle to begin with was a good one. He might have done better without bothering about uniforms; but going for the Castle right away is the only sensible way of beginning in Ireland. The plan at the Fenian Rising of marching away from the towns was not business; but of course the Fenians never had a chance after '65." He told us that his grandfather, who lived in Wicklow all through the insurrection of '98, and might easily enough have been hanged himself as a rebel, used to say that if a certain colonel of cavalry, who offered to take possession of Dublin Castle with his regiment for the Insurgents, had been listened to, Cornwallis and

the rest might have been seized ; and if Grattan had had the grit, he might have made an excellent bargain for ending the insurrection by a treaty reforming the Irish Parliament.

Parnell's superstitions have been frequently and unduly dwelt upon. They always seemed to me whimsicalities that amused him, rather than beliefs that had any real influence. His objection to travelling in a railway carriage numbered 13, or any multiple of 13, would undoubtedly have caused him to prefer travelling in a third class of an unobjectionable number to travelling in a first class marked with the brand of ill-luck. For that matter, if somebody led him to a third-class compartment, be the number what it might, I doubt whether Parnell would particularly notice whether it was in a first-class or a third-class carriage he was travelling. What is quite certain is, that any possible combination of thirteens would not have deterred him from completing his journey. His objection to the colour green, again, was genuine, and often laughable ; but arose, in my judgment, chiefly from a fear of arsenical poisoning. "How could you expect a country to have luck that has green for its colour!" he once said. When I reminded him that green, as the National colour, dated no farther back than the United Irishmen, and that until then the Irish ensign was supposed to be blue, he responded smiling : "It's just the same—blue is more than half green." A lady worked for him, while he was in



prison, a superb eider-down quilt, covered with green satin, with his monogram worked in gold bullion—a present worthy of a king. I am sure he must have sent a sweet and gracious acknowledgment, but the gorgeous quilt never rested on his bed. It was hidden away carefully underneath a press, where, I am afraid, the mice soon tarnished its glory. Lady devotees sent him innumerable other marks of homage worked in the dangerous colour—embroidered smoking-caps, tea-coseys, and even bright green hosiery. The latter he insisted resolutely on destroying; the others he distributed freely among his brother-prisoners, until almost every man in the prison, except himself, had his green tasselled turban and green woollen vests. Very different was his appreciation of the red and yellow flowered silk eider-down dressing-gown presented and manufactured by his own constituents in Cork, which he wore throughout his imprisonment, free from all apprehension of ill-luck or poison. His terror of contagious disease was very real indeed. One evening, I happened to mention at dinner that I had got a note informing me that two of my sub-editor's children were down with scarlatina. "My God! O'Brien," he cried, almost in a panic, "what did you do with the letter?" When I told him it was still in my pocket, he begged of me instantly to throw it into the fire. Seeing how genuine was his concern, I did so. "Now," said he, "wash your hands." This time I

found it difficult to avoid smiling. He bounded from the dinner-table, and with his own hands emptied the water ewer into the basin on the wash-hand-stand. "For God's sake, O'Brien, quick!" he cried, holding out the towel towards me, with an earnestness that set the whole company in a roar. He returned to his dinner in a state of supreme satisfaction. "Buckshot," he said, "is not going to get rid of us so cheaply as that."

We were pretty plentifully supplied with books. Parnell's first thought for his own amusement was a carpenter's bench and tools. It must be owned that they would have outstripped all the poets, novelists, and sages in his favour. But the Prisons' Board, somehow, did not like the notion of arming their distinguished prisoner with hand-saws and cold chisels. Failing the carpenter's bench, he dipped into an occasional book of history or Roman Law, and always extracted solid fruit from it; but, he used to say, "literature has no chance against the *Freeman*." Another indication of his mechanical genius recurs to me. A rich Irishman in Liverpool, Mr. Pat Byrne, presented him with a magnificent musical box, from which could be ground out five Irish Rebel airs. He delighted for a few days—not, I think, from any passion for music—to wind up the musical box to play "The Wearing of the Green" while we were at dinner. After a very few days the moderate cravings of his musical soul were satisfied. One morning we found him artistically

taking the costly toy to pieces to examine its machinery, and he found considerably more comfort in explaining to us, by the order and character of the nicks on the brass cylinder, how the sweet sounds were produced, than he had ever found in the tinkling melodies themselves. His method as a chess-player was characteristic. He took a bold, quick offensive, and before his antagonist could tell what he was at, had landed a piece on the opposite side of the board, a-straddle between the opponent's castle and queen. A risky game, but an amazingly successful one, like his political career. Strangely enough, the most dangerous antagonist he found amongst all his brother-prisoners was a little Mayo peasant lad named Nally, who, until his committal to prison, had never seen a chess-board, but who often countered the Chief's dashing strategy by his own slow, watchful cunning ; and Parnell's temper never showed sweeter than when he was mated by the small Mayo peasant boy.

His interest in the mechanical took another practical turn. All through the winter rumours were constantly circulating of the removal of the principal suspects for trial in England. Parnell was constantly haunted by the belief that that would be Mr. Forster's last desperate move, and that, if tried, it would be successful, in the existing state of English prejudice, in procuring certain conviction and unscrupulous sentences. He had made up his mind to escape from prison, if the danger of being kidnapped to England



should become imminent. I think it was to Mr. Brennan—always an adept diplomatist in such matters—that he owed several opportunities of examining the prison keys. It was a labour of love to him to take impressions of the keys, whose different compartments and intricacies had for him the charm a painter might find in the *gribouillage* of some Old Master. In a short time, a set of keys were manufactured for him by a Dublin locksmith from his models, and he was ever after happy with the knowledge that any night he pleased he might walk out of Kilmainham without any serious danger of interruption.

I have often been asked what were Parnell's religious views, without being able very accurately to reply. Every Sunday morning regularly, at the hour of Protestant divine service, the head warder presented himself with the stereotyped inquiry, "Are you for service to-day, Mr. Parnell?" To which, after a minute of deliberation, as if not desiring to kill off all hope in the soul of the head warder, would come the invariable reply, "No, I don't think so—not to-day." And we remarked, as all the commentators do of Governor Festus' promise to give St. Paul another hearing at an opportune time, that, for Parnell as for Festus, "the opportune time" never arrived. The Protestant prison chaplain, the Rev. Mr. Fleming, betimes paid him a visit in his room, and was always received with a somewhat frigid courtesy; but Parnell had somehow got it into his head that the name was Fletcher, not Fleming, and

he would persist in dubbing the chaplain ceremoniously "Mr. Fletch—ah," until the poor man gave up all hope of getting his catechumen so far as even conceding his own name to him. With the Catholic chaplain, Canon Kennedy, he was on much friendlier terms. The dear old gentleman would stay gossiping with him by the hour, on every topic except religion, and found it so hard to take himself off, that he sometimes stood glued to the floor, irresolutely rapping his thumb-nail against his teeth, until the clang of the prison bell, or the irruption of a warder, put an end to the interview. On religious topics Parnell was closely reserved, and never disrespectful. Catholicism was the only form of religion for which I ever knew him to betray any tenderness. Long afterwards, when, in the smoking-room of the House of Commons, we were reading of the execution of Joe Brady and Tim Kelly for the Phoenix Park murders, he remarked very gravely, "The Catholic Church is the only one that can make a man die with any real hope." The only positive opinion I ever heard him drop was once, after I had been inveighing against the insolent cruelty of the atomic theories, which Tyndall had at the time brought into vogue, and insisting what a gloomy farce they would reduce human life to without the promise of immortality. He said softly, and with something like a sigh, "The only immortality a man can have is through his children." On one evening which I

spent with him in his home in Avondale, we walked out by Moore's Meeting of the Waters, which lay at the foot of his demesne, luxuriating in the glories of a starlight night. Astronomy was one of his strong points—especially questions of the measurement of distances. He knew all the latest discoveries in the galaxy, and pointed out in what particular pinch of star dust, if my poor sight could discern it, some new asteroid was situate. From these excursions into the infinite heavens he warmed into wonder at the design, and, as I thought, into a reverential homage to the Designer, such as I had never seen him exhibit in so all but rapturous a degree before. He suddenly cut short the reverie with the remark, pointing to the millions of worlds in the blue, "We're a bit cheeky, aren't we, to take it for granted it is all for us on this absurd little ball of earth?" and proceeded to explain to me the instruments by which the astronomers calculate distances and magnitudes. He would not let me lead him back to the reflection that the human genius which discovered these things was an even better argument for an immortal spirit than the marvels of the starry universe.

As the winter wore on, two things became manifest to us, talking matters over interminably in Kilmainham. One was, that the hostility of the Bishops and priests made it impossible for the No-Rent Manifesto wholly to succeed. The other was, that it would succeed sufficiently to bring Mr. Forster and his Coercion plans to a tragic collapse, and also



to make the influence of the League almost as well felt in the the working of the Land Act as if the test cases had been allowed peacefully to proceed. The timid little Registrar of the Land Commission Court, Mr. "Billy" Smith, who immortalised himself on the day of the Court's first sitting by declaring "The Court of the Land League" (the poor man intended to say "of the Land Commission") "is now open!" gave an unconscious translation of the feeling in every mind, that whatever good was to come out of the Court would come out of the wholesome terror of the Land League, past and present. The loyalist farmers of the North, who tumbled over one another into the Land Courts in a mighty rush, lived to regret their greedy haste, while the Southern and Western peasants, who did not see their way to go the whole heroic length with the No-Rent Manifesto, used it skilfully to stipulate that payment of rent should only be made with a generous rebate. But it was an appalling winter of suffering and of crime on both sides. Mr. Forster delivered over great districts of the country, with sovereign powers, to four pro-consuls—Mr. Clifford Lloyd, Captain Traill, Captain Plunkett, and Mr. H. A. Blake—as to the vagaries of two of whom Indian sunstrokes may to some extent excuse them, if not their chief, for their mad brutalities. One of them issued a circular instructing the police to shoot at sight at anybody whom they suspected to be "about to commit a crime." Another, not to be outdone,

imported a kennel of bloodhounds, at whose head he scoured the country, until one of the brutes bit off the arm of one of his satellites, and so discredited that particular "resource of civilisation." A third actually advertised evicting landlords that he kept a staff of old army pensioners and ex-Indian officers, whom he was prepared to let out as emergency men, at wages named, to carry out eviction campaigns. Campaigns conceived in such a spirit were actually carried out by such instruments, upon an immense scale, with the fated result that the people, stripped of the protection of their open organisation, retorted no less savagely the tactics of the bloodhound captains and of the murderous police circulars and of the house-burnings. Lord Clanricarde's agent was shot dead in the streets of Loughrea; a Mayo landlord, Mr. Isidore Bourke, was murdered, with his military escort. With the statistics of evictions mounted up the statistics of agrarian crime, fast as the cannon-shot after the blaze. After six years for reflection, the great newspaper that charged Parnell with organising the Phoenix Park murders made not the least scruple of charging that the agrarian crimes of this winter were organised with Land League moneys, and by Land League emissaries. It is interesting to remember that this theory was even then submitted to an enlightened English public by the *Times'* collaborateur of after times, Mr. Richard Pigott, from whom *Macmillan's Magazine* stooped to receive an article denouncing the immorality of

the No-Rent Manifesto and exposing the iniquities of the Irish leaders, who, when they did not steal the Land League funds, devoted them to hiring murderers and cattle-houghers. Mr. Egan responded with a letter which, if the *Times* had kept it in mind, might have saved it some anxiety and treasure. He showed that Pigott's article was the vengeance of a blackmailer who had striven to extort a large sum from him under threat of making some appalling revelation about the embezzlement of the Land League funds. But in those days there was no curing a simple English public of their faith in the Richard Pigotts. It is certain that some of the wilder spirits of the League were led to desperate deeds by occult conspiracies, to which the suppression of the Land League gave their opportunity; but it is no less certain that some of the worst of the murder-clubs of this red winter were organised directly by *agents provocateurs* commissioned by Dublin Castle. One case we successfully unearthed in *United Ireland* afterwards, at the risk of ruin—that of the murder conspiracy at Tubbercurry. It was conducted from start to finish by a head constable of the constabulary, Bartley by name, who was set up in Tubbercurry as a blacksmith, where he manufactured pikes and swore in his dupes, and, from his forge, despatched them on their bloody business, and, to save himself from suspicion, brought the police to seize the pikes he had himself fashioned.



It would be an error to suppose that Parnell regarded the situation without grave anxiety. The *frondeurs*, who afterwards taunted him with the Kilmainham Treaty as an act of weakness when all was victory, had as little notion as such warriors usually have of the dangers that counterbalanced the apparent success of the No-Rent Manifesto. The time has not come even yet for fully setting them forth. Secret societies are in this respect like a wolf held by the ears—dangerous to hold back and dangerous to let go. The Irish secret societies, which were the *dissecta membra* of the Fenian movement, contained, it must always be remembered, some of the very best, as well as some of the very worst, men in the community. Parnell could never have created a National Movement worth England's while to conciliate, if he had not succeeded in attracting the cream of the Fenian men, so long as he was in a position to offer Ireland a better resource in open and constitutional courses ; but his arrest, by "driving discontent under the surface," had again given the upper hand to the fanatics, the desperadoes, and the *agents provocateurs*. Parnell, who had no precise knowledge of the intricacies and ramifications of the rival secret conspiracies, which were always more or less simmering, especially in America, knew enough vaguely to be in a continual state of doubt where he might find the ground mined under his feet, or in what new direction the occult forces might explode. He was not deceived by the panic-

stricken cries of the landlords, nor by the bluff on our own side as to the extent to which the No-Rent Manifesto was operative. To a visitor who asked how his own tenants were behaving, he replied, with his pleasant smile, "They are standing by the No-Rent Manifesto splendidly"; but he knew the cautious Irish peasant to the core, and had also a keen sense of the miseries which the struggle must produce. One day in February or March—it was probably the first time he was beginning to revolve the notion of a Kilmainham Treaty—he surprised two or three of us—Mr. O'Kelly and (if I remember aright) Mr. Brennan and myself—with the observation, "Don't you think we have got about enough of this thing? The situation is all right up to the present. It is never hard to get the Irish farmer to defer paying his rent over the winter. But the time for the spring work has now come. They will all be asking themselves, Will they be there to reap the crop, if they put it down? Most of them will pay up. They are doing it already. I know I should if I had a wife and family. A certain number won't, because they can't. They may begin shooting, but if they do, where is it to end? No, we shan't be able to bankrupt the landlords, but we can break Buckshot. After that, anything is possible." He did not pursue the subject further at the time.

Up to this time, however, the No-Rent movement was thoroughly frightening the landlords. On December 16th, Mr. Norris Goddard, the fighting

chief of the Property Defence Association, made a frantic appeal to the Lord Mayor of London to start a Mansion House Fund in aid of the distracted landowners, adding, "Unless help is speedily forthcoming, it will come too late." The London papers were full of fuliginous descriptions from their special correspondents of the state of Ireland: the tenants on vast estates proffering, in lieu of their rents, I.O.U.'s promising to pay on the day of the release of the suspects, and "withdrawing in a body" when the I.O.U.'s were not accepted; the boycotting system so much perfected that the Marchioness of Drogheda was obliged to milk her own cows, for want of a servant; the Moonlighters roaming through Clare and Kerry, making the nights hideous, until one maddened landlord wrote to the papers to suggest the organisation of Vigilance Committees of landlord Moonlighters to roam the country in black masks, in their turn, and take prominent Leaguers out of their beds, and flog them or shoot them in the legs; and, finally, the Coercionist Chief Secretary left without one unbought friend in the whole island. And while the Mansion House Fund made but a sickly response to Mr. Norris Goddard's appeal, the Irish in America were contributing 250,000 dollars at the meetings addressed by Mr. T. P. O'Connor and Mr. Healy.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr. O'Connor has often told me—and it is an eloquent commentary on the ignorant English prejudice as to the implacability of the Irish in America—that he and Mr. Healy found the utmost



It was while affairs were in this position that Captain O'Shea made his first visit to Kilmainham, as the go-between of the negotiations with the section of the Cabinet in whose eyes already Forster was a Jonah whose doom was sealed. The world already knows all that is to be known of these transactions, unless in the very unlikely event of Mr. Chamberlain unbosoming himself of his confidences. I was myself released from prison a few days before the negotiations reached the crucial stage; but to none of his colleagues, up to the last hour, did Parnell give more than a vague suggestion of what was passing. He afterwards told me that, until an hour before his release, he was afraid Lord Hartington would frighten Gladstone and save Forster. He spoke habitually of Mr. Chamberlain, Sir Charles Dilke, and Mr. Shaw-Lefevre as assured friends. He regarded Sir Charles Dilke as the more stable force of the three. He, like all of us, attributed to that statesman's unhappy eclipse in public life the divagations of Mr. Chamberlain

difficulty in reconciling the majority of their Irish-American audiences to the No-Rent movement. Nothing but Parnell's arrest and the brutal suppression of the League could have induced them to give it any countenance. Mr. O'Connor's Irish-American experiences remind me of a little incident worthy of mention. One night, a week or two before the split of 1890, "T. P." addressed a magnificent discourse to a great audience in Philadelphia, where the delegates from Ireland were beginning their campaign. "T. P.," I said, when we came together in the hotel afterwards, "if you could only make that speech all through the United States, we would go home with £250,000." "My dear boy," was the genial reply, "that's precisely what I'm going to do. When Healy and I were out I made one speech seventeen hundred times on end."

when Home Rule became practical politics. He often told me that Mr. Chamberlain used to say to him: "You might have an Irish Republic, so far as I am concerned, if you would only help us to dish the Whigs."<sup>1</sup> But Parnell regarded smoke-room blague of that kind not as things seriously intended, but as indications of a flippant and somewhat unscrupulous habit of mind. He had a great admiration for Mr. Chamberlain's talents, and hoped for much from his combination with Sir Charles Dilke. "We could do a good deal for them, but," he said, "they can do nothing much for us without the Old Man."

Mr. Forster knew that the thanes were deserting him. He pleaded passionately that the rents were being secretly paid up, and that all was coming right. But the omens were against him. It was calculated that, at the end of December, the tenants of estates covering 1,598,403 acres, and a rental of £1,439,246, were still holding out. Evictions, arrests, and sanguinary crimes were multiplying. The landlords, far from affording him any moral support, held a great meeting of 3000 landowners, in January, under the presidency of the Duke of Abercorn, to cry anathema against the Land Com-

<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, in the days of Mr. Chamberlain's rampant rage against Home Rule, I mentioned the fact in a speech in his own constituency (March 17th, 1888), and he did not attempt to contest it, beyond making an affectation to deny quite another and irrelevant assertion, which I never made, that he had ever been asked to assent to an Irish Republic.

missioners for impiously reducing their rental. Perhaps the crowning blow of all was that, when the Poor Law elections took place in March, by one universal impulse the country rose, and, in spite of a sorely restricted franchise, swept the landlords from their old ascendancy at the Poor Law Boards, and put the most advanced of the suspects in their places, thus tearing away the last rag of verisimilitude from the plea that the people were only pining to be delivered from the Parnell despotism. Mr. Herbert Gladstone, who, possibly not without the knowledge of his father, came over in strict incognito to study the situation (he was discovered from the initials on his linen by the chambermaid of a Cork hotel, and was unmercifully chaffed by one of the young lionesses of the Ladies' Land League, while attending a series of evictions), went back full of loathing for the crimes of the landlords and the brutalities of the police satraps, and convinced that Forster was living in a world of hallucinations as to the state of Ireland. In spite of all, the Chief Secretary went on his way of blunderheaded righteousness, with an unshrinking faith to the last. A few weeks before his fall, he made a surprise visit to Tullamore and to Tulla, in the County Clare, put his head out of a hotel window and harangued the people with the fatherly benevolence of a Messiah who had delivered them from the Land League house of death. Because the people listened to him in silence (under the guns of a considerable armed force), he returned to Dublin



rejoicing, and a couple of nights afterwards assured the House of Commons that Ireland was wholly with him, except a parcel of "broken men and reckless boys," and that, give him but three months more, and he could say, "Catalina fuit." When, twelve months afterwards, the revelations as to the conspiracy of the Invincibles came out, it was found that, on the evening when Forster returned, a victor, to Dublin from Tullamore, persuaded that the back of the Irish difficulty was broken, the Invincibles were lying in wait, in armed parties of two or three, from the railway station to the Chief Secretary's Lodge, to carry out an elaborate plan for his assassination, and were only foiled by a mistake as to the hour of arrival of the train by which he travelled.<sup>1</sup>

Early on the morning of the 17th of April, the Governor of the prison came into my cell to announce my release. He begged of me to hurry, if I was to see my mother alive. When I reached the Hospice, I found that whoever had fixed the moment of my release had come perilously near to being too late. But the hour and a half, brief as it was, which remained, was sufficient to make the

<sup>1</sup> The people of Tullamore expressed their true feeling the week after his visit, by ejecting an ancient landlord potentate from the chairmanship of the Board of Guardians and installing Mr. James Lynam, a suspect just released from prison, in his place. The Tulla Board of Guardians made an equally unkind response to his visit. At their first meeting they unanimously set aside the local landlord Panjandrum and Deputy-Lieutenant, who had been their chairman, and elected two of Forster's prisoners, of the most incorrigible stripe, as their chairman and vice-chairman.

last scene one of unclouded joy and peace. Pain had ceased altogether for several weeks before, and our poor patient regarded my release from prison with as mercifully exaggerated a happiness as she had regarded the arrest with an exaggerated apprehension of the pains of imprisonment. She was so transformed with a serene content, that even the skilled eye of the Sisters was deceived, and there seemed no reason why I should not go on to the Imperial Hotel with my luggage, which was still waiting at the gate. When I returned, in less than an hour, all was over, except recollections of sisterly sympathy and angelic other-worldliness that can never quit my memory.

Some time early in April, Parnell made a notable observation to me, which was accompanied with one of his brightest smiles: "Don't pitch into me too hard, O'Brien, if, like Micky Calligy, I sign conditions and go out." Micky Calligy was a poor Western peasant who was supposed to have purchased his liberation by signing a promise of better behaviour. It was the first hint I got of the Kilmainham Treaty, beyond the knowledge that Parnell's mind was running constantly on the necessity for some *modus vivendi*. A week previous to my release, Parnell himself had quitted Kilmainham, on parole, on April 10th, to attend the funeral of his favourite nephew, whose mother lived in Paris; but his observation could not have referred to this unforeseeable event. It was on his way to

London on this occasion that he was joined in the train at Willesden by Mr. Justin M'Carthy and Mr. Frank Byrne, the Secretary of the Land League of Great Britain. The judges of the Parnell Commission were solemnly asked to believe that their interview had reference to the organisation of the Phoenix Park murders. It will probably be found hereafter that it had more to do with communications with Cabinet Ministers than with Invincibles. There was a feeling in the air that Parnell would not be taken back to Kilmainham. With his own impenetrable reticence and gift for invisibility, however, he eluded all the efforts of newspaper men or crowds to ascertain his intentions, and returned to Kilmainham in due course of business. A week afterwards, the people of Dublin awoke on the 3rd of May to learn that Messrs. Parnell, Dillon, and O'Kelly had been released from prison the previous evening, had secretly got aboard the Holyhead mail-boat, and departed without saying a word or making a sign; and a day or two afterwards Mr. Michael Davitt was set free from Portland Prison. Parnell had, as he jokingly anticipated, "signed conditions like Micky Calligy," but they were the conditions of a Treaty which recognised Forster's prisoners as the conquerors and left the unlucky Chief Secretary, armed with all the power of the Empire, a dismissed and broken man.



## CHAPTER XVII

### THE KILMAINHAM TREATY—AND AFTER

1882

WAS Parnell's Kilmainham Treaty the surrender of a feeble leader or the triumph of a prudent one? It seems a silly question enough now, but even a man of his staying power might easily enough have been permanently discredited by the murmurs raised in his own ranks, even in the darkest of those days when his policy was struggling to its feet, after the stunning blow of the Phœnix Park murders. As Mr. Forster believed in his soul he had only to get three months more to complete the subjection of the League, the no less fatuous apostles of No-Rent at any price would insist that Parnell had enfeoffed himself to the Liberals at a moment when the No-Rent strike had only to get a free rein to be in-suppressible. By a phenomenon not unusual in Irish public life, those who murmured against the abandonment of the No-Rent Manifesto when it had served its purpose, were those who, having first fanatically preached No-Rent in the abstract, shrank

from the responsibility of the No-Rent Manifesto, when the hour arrived for action, and even discovered reasons for condemning it. Mr. Davitt, who had found it his duty to place himself in opposition to the first official programme of the Land League, and to every official programme ever since adopted by the country down to the memorable Land Settlement of 1903, was not long released from prison until he felt himself conscientiously compelled to repudiate both the Kilmainham Treaty and the No-Rent Manifesto, to which his name had been affixed by his close friend, Mr. Brennan, by virtue of a sort of power of attorney left to him for that purpose before his incarceration. His singular view of the Manifesto, adopted at a moment when there was no alternative except the self-effacement of the League, he thus explained in the *New York Herald*:—

While I admit the great success of the Manifesto as far as results were concerned, I think that it dulled the weapon which could have been used to give the final blow to Landlordism. Had the League waited until two or three hundred thousand tenant farmers were ready to obey it, it would have involved the eviction of a million of people. That would have been a measure which the Government could not have faced, and the result would have been the downfall of Landlordism.

Mr. Davitt, however, was a born *frondeur*; a picturesque and charming personality rather than a governing force. He has always good-humouredly pictured his own part in an Irish Parliament as that

of perpetual Leader of the Opposition, apparently without quite realising the constitutional corollary, that the freedom of that position might sometimes have to be exchanged for the responsibilities of government. He genially tells against himself an observation of Parnell, when they were once discussing how an Irish Parliament would set to work for the regeneration of the country. "Suppose you were Prime Minister in the morning," he asked the Chief, "how would you begin?" "I think, Davitt," was Parnell's smiling reply, "I should begin by locking you up." But Parnell and all Irishmen of all bloods and all creeds would have taken care that the place of their wilful but beloved countryman's figurative captivity was a very paradisaic bower of roses indeed.

As a matter of fact, the number of evictions that had actually taken place, comparatively small as it was, was sufficient to burden the funds of the League for many a subsequent year with an almost ruinous charge. Considering that these funds were running out at the rate of more than £1500 a week when the Kilmainham Treaty stopped the drain, it is only too easy to calculate for how many weeks they would have held out, if the appalling figure of a million of evicted people, which Mr. Davitt so lightly contemplated, had been realised. Besides, Parnell's positive genius had resorted to a General Rent Strike not as a vague revolutionary fetish, but as a conditional act of reprisal, which had now



accomplished its practical purpose. The "vigour beyond the law" with which the outlawed organisation had retorted Forster's illegalities had effected what the test cases would have accomplished by milder methods. The Land Commission, which began with the theory that there need be no general reduction of rents, found itself obliged to decree an average reduction of 20 per cent on the Irish rental; and it would be a puerile, if it were not a barbaric, dream to expect the Irish farmers, in face of such a prospect, to rush to their own extermination in hundreds of thousands. O'Connell left prison with a shattered reputation, and without a hope for the future of the policy for which he had been imprisoned. Parnell quitted Kilmainham as a potentate who had sealed the fate of the Minister who had imprisoned him, and as the ally of the Prime Minister, who had thrown the London Guildhall into a frenzy of enthusiasm by the news of his arrest. On the one condition of putting an end to a No-Rent Strike, of which he was at least as tired as the Prime Minister, he stepped out into a country where his power was more deeply rooted than ever, and to which he was able to make the royal gift of £1,500,000 per annum struck off its rack-rents, and went back to a House of Commons which recognised the inexorable justice of his views both on the Land question and on the question of the Government of Ireland.

The Tories vied with the Liberals in testifying

to the soundness of his doctrine, that Landlordism must be abolished. Shortly before his release, Mr. W. H. Smith, as the spokesman of the Tory Party, introduced a resolution recognising Purchase with State funds as the inevitable final issue of the Irish Land question. The Committee which the House of Lords appointed to investigate the working of the Gladstone Act made a report that might well have come out of the Land League Offices. "This much is clear," was the comment of one of the principal landlord organs, the *Evening Mail*, "if the scheme proposed by the Lords' Committee be adopted, the Fair-Rent clauses of the Land Act which are now everything will be nowhere, and in two years' time the Social Revolution will be complete, and Landlordism, as it has hitherto been understood, will be extinct." "What is this," cried Mr. Morley, in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, already a dynamic force in these great events—"what is this but the programme of Mr. Parnell?" "Only part of the programme of Mr. Parnell, as the *Pall Mall Gazette* will observe presently," was my comment in *United Ireland*.

Parnell was equally ready to take his allies from the Liberal or the Tory benches, and from either side of Westminster Hall. He was ready with definite suggestions for each. It has been foolishly claimed that Mr. Maurice Healy (one scarcely less gifted than his gifted brother, and who, if he had added to the excellent judgment which his better-

known brother chiefly lacked, the readiness and keenness of tongue which made his brother famous, might have been a consummate Parliamentary leader)—that Mr. Maurice Healy, who was the able draughtsman of Parnell's Land Bill of 1882, was also the author of its provisions. The truth is, that before Parnell had seen Mr. Healy at all on the subject of the Bill, he had dictated to me in prison the main provisions of his scheme in a *communiqué* which I published in *United Ireland* before my release. His idea of a satisfactory settlement of the Purchase question is of deep interest now, in the light of the fierce opposition offered by some leading Irishmen to the far more splendid terms of purchase secured to the tenants by the Land Conference Settlement of 1903.

"A clause is inserted" (I quote from my communication to *United Ireland* of April 8th, 1882) "which provides, that the whole of the money for the purchase of holdings by the occupying tenants may be advanced by the Commission, and that in the case of holdings not exceeding £30 in valuation, the purchase-money may be repayable by instalments of £3 : 16s. per cent per annum, extending over fifty-two years, instead of instalments of 5 per cent per annum, extending over thirty-five years, as required by the Act of 1881. It is obvious that this provision will afford means to the tenant farmer who has had his rent judicially fixed, or who may agree with his landlord out of Court as to a fair rent, to purchase his holding upon easy and equitable terms, which would still farther reduce the actual payments made by him below the original fair rent fixed or agreed upon. For example, a tenant who



has had, by the Court or by agreement, his fair rent fixed at £20 per annum, would become the owner of his holding by making an annual payment of £15 : 4s., instead of the yearly rent of £20, that payment to expire after fifty-two years, with the security of ownership in the meantime."

These words, which were taken down by me in shorthand from Parnell's lips, prescribed, as "easy and equitable terms" of purchase, a reduction of less than 20 per cent on first-term judicial rents; and these terms he only demanded for the most necessitous of the tenants—those under £30 valuation; while the Land Conference Report stipulated that the entire body of the Irish tenants should be empowered to purchase at an annual average reduction of 20 per cent, not on first-term rents, but on second-term rents, reduced by an average of 20 per cent from the original rents, and by an average of 22 per cent more from the rents thus reduced, while first-term tenants were to be enabled to purchase at an annual average reduction of 42 per cent of rents, already reduced by 20 per cent below their payments before 1881. In other words, the Land Conference Settlement would have secured to all tenants the ownership of the soil, on terms substantially twice as advantageous as those which Mr. Parnell would gladly have closed with in 1882 for only a small category of them; and some of those who unhappily exerted themselves most actively to discredit and mutilate the Land Conference Settlement voted readily for the far more

modest terms prescribed by Parnell in 1882 as "easy and equitable."

But while Parnell was ready to discuss the Abolition of Landlordism with the Tories, he was ready also with palliative suggestions for the improvement of the Fair Rent Clauses, to which Gladstone naturally clung with a parental fondness. One of the first practical fruits of the Kilmainham Treaty was an Arrears Act, for which his Bill had furnished the cue. His triumphs in the agrarian field, however, were but the smaller part of his spoils. Gladstone had been converted to Home Rule with a certainty which the nebulous imprecision of the language events forced him to hold for years to come did not conceal from the penetrating eye of the Irish Leader. In one of the last numbers of *United Ireland*, printed abroad (March 4th, 1882), I had an article plainly indicating the change of front which was three years afterwards to startle the Empire.

It is not in Mr. Gladstone's nature to say in plain words what he means, but we see no reason to doubt that he is really making another bid for the favour of the Irish people, and that that bid is Home Rule. He concedes the principle that purely Irish business should be under purely Irish control. All he wants is a plan, which any Parliamentary draughtsman could supply at twenty-fours' notice, by which an Irish Parliament would be kept to Irish business. It is perfectly easy to see what Mr. Gladstone is at. He has staked his fame on the pacification of Ireland.

When that article was written, Parnell was a prisoner, his organisation suppressed, nine hundred of his foremost disciples under lock and key, the very newspaper in which it was written printed in a foreign country, and obliged to circulate through Ireland as secretly as a priest of the Penal days; to all outward seeming Coercion completely dominant, and the National spirit completely cowed. Two months afterwards, Gladstone was not only opening his jails and dismissing his Chief Secretary, and confessing the inadequacy of his Land Act, by promising to introduce an amending one, but he was placing Home Rule in the forefront of practical politics. The speech in which the most powerful Liberal Premier of the century disclosed the Kilmainham Treaty to the House of Commons was one which, but for the tragedy in the Phoenix Park, would have accelerated Home Rule by a quarter of a century. He confessed that "the compulsory government of Ireland" would have to be given up. In weighty words he declared, in a House breathlessly silent (it was remarked) as it had not been since the suspense of the Crimean excitements, that "in my opinion, and in the opinion of my colleagues, there is a great deal to be done with regard to the reorganisation of the Irish Government" (as he put it elsewhere, "beginning with Dublin Castle and going down to the magistrates"), "and until we work in that direction we shall not permanently obtain tranquillity in Ireland."



Parnell bore himself in victory with a dignity worthy of the magnanimity of the other high contracting party to the Kilmainham Treaty. O'Connell left his prison in the midst of a gorgeous procession, which was destined to be the ghastly funeral obsequies of his power. Parnell slipped away from Kilmainham in a cab, and was on board the mail-boat for England, while bands and excited crowds were searching here, there, and everywhere for him in Dublin. Nor was the attitude of the Irish people less worthy of the great occasion of international reconciliation that had arisen. "Reports of rejoicings," I wrote in *United Ireland* of May 6th (*dies infanda*!), "heart-thrilling, but not indecent and not boastful, pour in on us as we go to press, like one endless salute of National artillery. . . . Mr. Forster has vanished, the Irish Nation has won, and can afford to give up exulting over his grave."

The released leaders were commended for "pointing the true moral of the situation by returning quietly to their business in Parliament, and declining to celebrate their vindication with vulgar triumphing." The mind of the country was, I think, accurately reflected in the first leading article of the same issue, headed "Coercion gives up the Ghost!"

Mr. Forster has resigned! Mr. Parnell, Mr. Dillon, and Mr. O'Kelly are free! The prisons are to be cleared out—so is the Castle! As dramatic a climax as any-

thing in history—a Roman Triumph, only it is the captives who have mounted into the Conqueror's car. We don't want our people to lose their heads with giddy joy. The end is not yet. Coolness, vigilance, and courage will be as needful to secure what we have won as they were to win it.

It wound up with this notable reference to one of those events which "might have been":

The best information seems to point to Mr. Chamberlain as the man who, having overthrown Mr. Forster in the Cabinet, is bound to replace him in the Irish Secretaryship. *He shall have a fair field.* More than that we cannot undertake to say.

It was, perhaps, a good deal to say for a journal that had been for six months hunted for its life over half Europe, and for a country that had been driven to the verge of madness by every species of coercive torture and landlord ferocity. A week afterwards the journal which contained these counsels of peace to the Irish people was being denounced as having instigated the Phoenix Park murders!

Nothing short of one of those fiendish strokes of fate which one is sometimes tempted to believe to be hapless Ireland's peculiar heritage could have marred the situation thus created by the genius of two great men, wielding without question the power and the goodwill of the two islands. So absolutely untroubled seemed the horizon, that the night after that week's issue of *United Ireland* was got to

press, I set off with an easy mind for the holiday which the labours and sorrows of seven tragic months had rendered an urgent matter. Three days afterwards, as I was walking on one of the great boulevards of Paris with Mr. Egan and Father Sheehy, we stopped at a kiosque to buy one of the Sunday papers, and read that the new Chief Secretary, Lord Frederick Cavendish, and the Under Secretary, Mr. Burke, had been murdered the previous afternoon in the Phoenix Park, almost under the eyes of the new Lord-Lieutenant, Earl Spencer. The holiday came to an abrupt end. I returned by the night mail to London, on my way to Ireland, to see what could be done, if anything, to save the movement from the red ruin that, sudden as an outburst of hell's fires, had opened underneath us. I found Parnell and his colleagues literally speechless. We sat for hours together, and could find nothing except some ghastly banalities to say. Biggar was the only Stoic of the lot, but nobody had any longer heart enough to smile at his bizarre optimism. The day of joy that Mr. Davitt's release from prison ought to have been was turned into a day of humiliation. His cry, "I wish to God I had never left Portland!" is a tragedy in eternal black. His first day of freedom, on returning to London, was spent in preparing, with Messrs. Parnell and Dillon, the address to the Irish people, which was issued in their joint names. Critics have found fault with its tone as savouring



too strongly of self-abasement and despair.<sup>1</sup> Fault had been particularly found with Parnell's intimation to Gladstone that he was prepared to withdraw from public life altogether, if the other parties to the Kilmainham Treaty deemed it desirable. It was said to be an undignified act of submission from the Irish Leader to the English Premier. The critics were no less severe upon my own substitution for the cartoon in the next number of *United Ireland* of a black-bordered cenotaph with the inscription: "In token of abhorrence and shame for the stain cast upon the character of our nation for manliness and hospitality," by the assassination of Lord Frederick Cavendish and his brother-victim. It was said (and Biggar said it in words of somewhat brutal detachment, worthy of a *Times* leading article on the blowing to pieces of a Russian Grand Duke) that all these manifestations were excessive and hysterical, in reference to a crime for which English misgovernment had a deeper responsibility than Irish leaders, who had striven their best to

<sup>1</sup> It is not unworthy of remark that the phrase "the Policy of Conciliation," which Messrs. Dillon and Davitt felt it their duty to inveigh against, in every form of sarcasm and contempt, in their campaign against the far more widespread and benign Land Settlement of 1903, and with scarcely less tragic results for the Irish Cause, was first invented in this Manifesto signed by Messrs. Parnell, Dillon, and Davitt, in lamenting the ruin brought upon the Irish cause by the Phoenix Park murders. "In this hour of sorrowful gloom," the Manifesto said, "we venture to give an expression of our profound sympathy with the people of Ireland in the calamity which has befallen our cause through a horrible deed, and with those who had determined at the last hour that a policy of conciliation should supplant that of terrorism and national distrust."

keep discontent within constitutional bounds. But they who argue thus have but a poor comprehension either of the extent of the National catastrophe caused by the Phoenix Park murders or of Parnell's determination to prove, above all things, that if the tragedy was to be the means of tearing up the Kilmainham Treaty, the disaster must not be laid at the doors of any ill-faith or equivocation on the part of the Irish signatories to the compact. Nobody knew from whom the crime had proceeded, or what was the object of the perpetrators. It is pretty clear now that it was the result of an access of blood fury on the part of some desperado, who, finding all the elaborate plans of his co-conspirators for taking the life of Mr. Forster to be in vain, turned their weapons against his subordinate rather than let their dreaded Invincible Conspiracy end in smoke. The first time I heard even of the name of the Invincibles was from a black-bordered threatening letter which was left in the letter-box of *United Ireland* office on the night after the murders, intimating that the Under Secretary had been "executed" by order of that mysterious body. Even this I did not see until my return to Dublin. The only theory we could form that day in London was that the tragedy was either the outcome of some dark police plot to enmesh the Irish leaders or a stroke of vengeance from some occult enemies of the Kilmainham Treaty, with a view to making its conciliation policy null and void.

I walked down to the House of Commons that Monday afternoon with Mr. Healy and Mr. John Barry. There was an excited crowd around Old Palace Yard, and we walked through them not without some doubts whether our journey would not come to a conclusion on the neighbouring lamp-posts. Nobody pointed us out, however, and electric though the indignation of the hour was, it was too deep for mere rowdyism. It was one of the occasions on which the House of Commons can be as majestic as a funeral service in Westminster Abbey. Gladstone spoke with the bowed head of an old man stooping over the open grave of a child of his heart; Parnell bore himself with a grave dignity that was more striking still. There were three or four ill-mannered growls from a group of Irish Tories when he rose, but by the end of his first sentence he had conquered the respectful silence, and even sympathy, of an assembly which was, nevertheless, rocking with the fires of a suppressed volcano. How finely just the House of Commons can sometimes be in great moments was never better proven than by the fact that Forster was the only man whose speech set their teeth on edge. There was something in the rugged righteousness and aggressive self-justification, not to say self-jubilation, of the dethroned Coercionist that smacked rather of triumph than of the subdued feeling proper to an hour in which everybody felt the relations of the two countries were undergoing



a tragic change. His offer to return to Ireland and fill the breach left by the murdered Chief Secretary had a note of bad taste—it would be unjust to say of conscious bravado—which caused nobody to be surprised to hear that the offer was declined.

Ministers and House had only to rise one stage higher of magnanimity, and the Phoenix Park murders, instead of being the signal for denouncing the Kilmainham Treaty between the two countries, might have that day made it an eternal bond of amity between them. I don't think it was any deep ill-will of the English people that made that supreme flight of magnanimity impossible. I am quite sure it was no lack of courage on the part of Gladstone, if he had only listened more to the promptings of high statesmanship, and less to the electioneering calculations of party managers! Such is the waywardness of our poor human destiny, it is almost certain that, if the Invincibles had only carried out the plans with which they entered the Phoenix Park, which contemplated the murder of Mr. Burke and of Mr. Burke alone, the Kilmainham Treaty would have fared forward without any serious interruption from a reaction in England. It was the seemingly appalling perfidy of the slaughter of a beloved and gallant Englishman, after he had been only a few hours in the country, as the bearer of a flag of peace and friendliness, that filled England with a horror that could no longer be reasoned with; and yet we all know now that even

the Phœnix Park murderers never dreamt of including Lord Frederick Cavendish in their plot; that they struck at him only when he had bravely striven to beat back the assailants of his companion, and that it was only the next morning they learned from the newspapers whom it was that they had slain. It was probably not more than a dozen writers of leading articles in the English Press who, in their own ignorance and in the immeasurable ignorance of Irish affairs in England, were responsible for reopening the war between the two nations, by a series of articles reeking with race hatred and appealing to the most savage prejudices, by depicting the murder of the peace-bearing English ambassador as the work of the Irish leaders, halloo'd on by a brutish and felonious Irish people. So unfathomably were they astray as to Ireland, that it is certain *United Ireland*<sup>1</sup> did not exaggerate when I wrote :

If the murderers had set to themselves the mission of doing more than centuries of English rule could do to break down the barriers between the people and the officers of justice, they could not have better succeeded. It is the simple truth to say that the assassins would have run a more instant risk of being lynched in Dublin than in London.

Had England and her statesmen allowed themselves to be guided by the woman's instinct which prompted the widow of the murdered Chief Secretary,

<sup>1</sup> May 13th, 1882.

in words of immortal beauty, to offer up his death as a peace-offering between Ireland and England ; had Mr. Chamberlain taken up the Chief Secretaryship when Lord Frederick Cavendish fell, and proceeded boldly upon the principles of Irish Government which he then no doubt sincerely believed in ; had Earl Spencer, the new Lord-Lieutenant, developed in that hour of hours the breadth of view and noble fortitude he displayed in after years in the affairs of Ireland ; had Gladstone, still in the flower of his age and genius, and with his unbroken Midlothian majority behind him, elected to confront the cave of Forsters, Goschens, and Hartingtons that was forming, and to go on unflinchingly with his promised programme of abandoning "the compulsory government of Ireland," and "beginning with the reorganisation of Dublin Castle," which he so heroically attempted many a year afterwards, with failing powers and an ill-disciplined Party—different indeed would be the golden page on which History's Muse might have written the story of twenty years that have demoralised and subjugated the Parliament of England and wasted away another half a million of the population of Ireland in Coercion struggle after Coercion struggle and embitterment upon embitterment. The die was cast, however. In the very speech in which Gladstone nobly mourned the dead, he felt himself compelled to reopen the wounds of the living. "So far as the Government is concerned," he said, in words of which everybody knew the



meaning, "all previous arrangements and intentions must be considered, and to some extent recast." He went further and added: "We intend to ask the House on Thursday next to permit us to introduce a measure relating to the repression of crime in Ireland"; and the muffled chorus of content that ran through the House proved that the temple of Janus once more stood wide open. Parnell himself confessed there was no breasting the torrent. "As to the steps which the Government propose to take," he said, "I do not deny that they may feel impelled to take some steps in the direction indicated by the Prime Minister, but I wish to express my belief that this crime has been committed by men who absolutely detest the cause with which I have been associated, and who have devised that crime and have carried it out as the deadliest blow in their power against our hopes and the new course which the Government have taken."

"We have got to begin all over again," Parnell remarked, as we walked up and down the corridor outside the Library, after the adjournment of the House. "But"—with the indomitable tenacity of the man—"I think we shall save the Arrears Bill." Though the heavens were falling, he was looking around steadfastly to see what could be saved from the ruins.

"Of all living Irishmen," wrote Mr. Healy in his Parliamentary Letter to *United Ireland*, "Mr. Parnell is the most to be pitied. The whole public burden of a

deed which wrecks his prospects, and is abhorrent to his soul, falls upon his shoulders, and now must he address himself to the task of facing a Coercion Bill which his Party have done nothing to provoke, but which they must meet with proper spirit, despite the odious and clamorous cries of reawakened British ferocity."

The Coercion Bill was introduced three days later, and was a declaration of war upon human liberty as savage as anything for which even the annals of English misgovernment in Ireland could furnish a model. Trial by jury was to be abolished, and trial by three Castle Judges, picked out for the purpose by the Lord-Lieutenant, to be substituted; the people were to be kept fast prisoners in their own houses after dark, where any policeman who chose was free to invade them, night or day, without a warrant! Newspapers were made liable to seizure whenever the Lord-Lieutenant objected to their contents, and fines beginning with £200 were allowed to be inflicted on the Lord-Lieutenant's *ipse dixit* in increasing ratio, until the objectionable journalist was bankrupted and crushed. Finally, Mr. Forster's mad ex-Indian Captains, the Resident Magistrates, were empowered to sit as summary Judges, and send any citizen to prison at hard labour for six months, without trial, for any word or act that these Condottieri chose to construe as "intimidation." Mr. Forster was justified in rising triumphantly from his back bench to claim those brutal measures of repression as his own, and to

taunt the Government with sitting meekly at his feet to copy the programme they had a week before parted company with him for insisting upon. There was and could be no answer. The country with which a treaty of conciliation had just been signed, and which with all its heart and strength had welcomed the message of peace with a sincerity worth more to English statesmanship than the winning of a great battle, was, by reason of the murder of one Englishman, who was not even known to his murderers, delivered over once more to a campaign of vengeance that left its burning mark on a nation's soul for many a bitter day to come.

A handful of the Irish members fought with a splendid fortitude against the tide. They uttered warnings which turned out to be prophecies, but which were scoffed at as threats. Mr. Morley was almost the only journalist of repute in England who, while the hurricane was at its fiercest, had the courage to remind the House of Commons, in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, that the "warnings of Irish members have a most unpleasant knack of coming true." As well try to put a bridle on the sounding storms. The Bill was whirled through as in a rush of many waters. Four or five Englishmen—Mr. Labouchere, Mr. Joseph Cowen of Newcastle, Mr. Storey, and Mr. Jesse Collings—alone stood out like mountain peaks over the deluge. Only 45 members, out of the entire Parliament of England, registered a vote against the Second Reading. Mr. Healy



spoke for a whole indignant Irish race when he told the pack of legislators howling round him that "they might pass their statute and do their worst. He would as lief reason with a horde of Zulus."

The work of National Reconciliation fell to pieces in the hands of Gladstone and Parnell at one impish stroke from the destiny that seems to preside over the relations between the two islands. Perfectly honest Englishmen managed to persuade themselves they were dealing justly in treating the Irish nation as a nation of Phoenix Park murderers, and Irish indignation bethought itself once more of the traditional Gaelic warning against the perfidy of "the Saxon smile." The Treaty of Kilmainham, like the violated Treaty of Limerick, "was broke ere yet the ink wherewith 'twas writ could dry."

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE DEEPEST DEPTH

1882

To the anxieties of Parnell's struggle against a crushing repressive law, following on the collapse of all his plans, were added troubles in his own camp. On the principle of *causa victa vilescit*, they were the inevitable consequence of a shining victory turned into a great defeat. Those who had objected to the No-Rent Manifesto being put forward now objected to its being dropped. The Kilmainham Treaty began to be murmured against as a weak surrender to the Liberals, if not an actual recantation of Home Rule. The Coercion Act was mockingly pointed to as the fit reward of faith in England's promises. It was even broadly suggested that the Parliamentary fight against the Coercion Bill was watered down, as the price of a contemptible Arrears Bill. The rift between the Country Party, who had but scant respect for the fireworks of Parliamentary warfare, and the Parliamentarians, who, under their breath, were apt to speak no less

irreverently of the fireworks of those who loved to be esteemed "the extreme men," grew wider and wider.

Mr. Henry George had sailed from America on the first news of the No-Rent Movement, in which he thought he discerned an opportunity for a first grand practical experiment of his theories of the Nationalisation of the Land. The fact that he was a free-speaking American, in an hour when free speech was under a ban, and that he came supported with all the well-deserved influence of the *Irish World*, secured for him a ready hearing from audiences who comprehended little of his doctrines, except that he associated with them the name of Michael Davitt. Mr. George, however, was a poor speaker, and soon knocked up against the fatal inadaptability of his theories to the circumstances of the country and to the Irish peasant's ineradicable longing for the ownership of the soil.

But the release of Mr. Davitt, and the breaking up of all the old methods and lines of demarcation which followed the Phoenix Park tragedy and the new Coercion Bill, put an entirely new face on the situation. Like all thinking men who have spent many months shut up with their own thoughts, far from the scene of action, he came out with a stronger bent than ever towards his original Nationalisation programme, and a tendency to see only the weak points in a good deal that had happened in his absence. In the only speech he made in Ireland,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kilkenny, May 22nd.



indeed, he announced that "he would say nothing calculated to give embarrassment in the present critical phase of National policy"; but a speech of his the following Sunday in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, on the occasion of a lecture by Mr. Henry George, left no doubt that he considered the moment an opportune one for restarting the movement on a Nationalisation basis. He was courteous and circumspect, but scarcely the less unmistakable in his criticisms of Parnell's policy.

"Mr. Gladstone deceived himself egregiously," he said,<sup>1</sup> "if he believed the Land League movement is about to efface itself, because he has been converted to Mr. Parnell's views upon the Arrears question, and accepted the services of Mr. O'Shea in effecting the Treaty of Kilmainham. I think it well to remind the jubilant Whigs, who believe they have captured the whole Irish Party through the diplomacy of a political go-between, that the Land League movement was organised to effect the complete abolition of Irish Landlordism, and that, until the work is freely and completely performed, there can be no alliance between the people of Ireland and any Whig Party."

And, with a somewhat sanguine estimate of the progress Mr. George's theories were supposed at the moment to be making, he intimates distinctly that not Peasant Proprietary, but that Nationalisation, which is the negation of all individual proprietorship, must be the substitute for Landlordism :—

<sup>1</sup> *United Ireland*, May 27th.

"Three years ago, when the cry of 'the Land for the People!' went up from a meeting in the West of Ireland, it was received with astonishment by our own countrymen, and branded at once as quixotic and wicked in England. Yet an organisation for effecting the Nationalisation of the Land in this country" (England) "is now numbered among its political forces, and has at its head such enlightened minds as Dr. Russel Wallace and Dr. Clarke. . . . Those who believed with myself that Peasant Proprietary—immensely preferable though it be to Landlordism—would not meet to the full the final solution of the Irish social problem were, two short years ago, put down as Utopian dreamers, yet one of the most respected Bishops" (Dr. Nulty of Meath) "has since proclaimed, that the land of a free country is the common property of the people of that country."

It has already been explained that what "the meeting in the West" meant by the cry of "the Land for the People!" was not the Georgian theory of common property in the soil, by the whole population (a theory that had never once presented itself to their comprehension), but the redistribution among the small holders of the rich grazing tracts from which their fathers had been evicted in the Famine "clearances"—a programme which they understood fifteen years before their leaders did, and which the Purchase Act of 1903 has consecrated as the true and statesmanlike solution of the problem of Western Congestion. Mr. Davitt followed up his speech in Manchester with another and still more decisive *discours-programme* in Liverpool, on June 6th. He revealed the line of

cleavage between Parnell and himself in a way which, although studiously friendly, increased still more the disquietude in the popular mind :<sup>1</sup>—

I daresay I will lay myself open to the suspicion of differing from Mr. Parnell, and from most of my colleagues in the Land League movement. But the fact is, there is not a particle more of difference of opinion between the member for Cork and myself than there was when we first stood together on a public platform in Westport, three years ago. Mr. Parnell advocates Peasant Proprietary. I am in favour of the land becoming the national property of Ireland.

The very important particle of difference was, that this time he proceeded to define the "Land for the People" and to put the Nationalisation of the Land before the country as a rival programme, which he worked out in the Liverpool speech in the utmost detail.<sup>2</sup> He left Liverpool immediately

<sup>1</sup> *United Ireland*, June 10th.

<sup>2</sup> The highly ingenious, but painfully impracticable, manner in which Mr. Davitt proposed to compensate the landlords, by an Irish land tax, "without touching the pockets of the English taxpayer," is only of interest now in its bearing upon his extraordinary crusade against the Land Conference Settlement of 1903. The Purchase Act of 1903 asks the Irish tenants to pay £100,000,000, borrowed from the State at an interest of  $2\frac{3}{4}$  per cent, for the entire ownership of the land of Ireland, or, including the purchases under the Ashbourne and Balfour Acts, £120,000,000 in all. Mr. Davitt, in his Liverpool speech, proposes that the tenants should pay the landlords £140,000,000 for a limited interest, or £20,000,000 more than the tenants' price under the Act of 1903 and its predecessors for the entire ownership of the soil. And the Act of 1903 is a much less advantageous one for the tenants than the Land Conference Report, which spells "Ichabod" in the eyes of Mr. Davitt. Individual purchasers would fare still worse under Mr. Davitt's scheme. He estimates the fair purchase price of the landlords' interest at "twenty years' purchase of half the present annual rental"



afterwards to carry the new campaign into the United States. While this formidable movement was on foot to change the basis of the movement and to make light of the efforts of "the Parliamentarians," Parnell and his couple of dozen fighting men, disputing the Coercion Bill line by line, were open to the taunt of Sir William Harcourt, that they were only "a miserable minority of the Irish members"; and, as a matter of fact, while Mr. Davitt was on his way to America, the entire band were suspended bodily after an all-night-and-all-day sitting. In *United Ireland* I strove hard to assuage public uneasiness, by making light of the differences between the leaders and preaching the Augustinian doctrine of tolerance: "In essential things, Unity; in doubtful things, Liberty; in all things, Charity." The Irish members carefully refrained from accentuating the difficulties. They assured the country that, in Mr.

—that is to say, 50 per cent off the rents as they stood unreduced before the Act of 1881. Under the Purchase Act of 1903 (pale a version as it is of the Land Conference recommendations) the purchase price which I counselled the Irish tenants to be a fair average, and against which Mr. Davitt and his friends have warred in almost speechless indignation, was only 18½ years' purchase of first-term rents—that is to say, of rents already reduced by 20 per cent below those for which Mr. Davitt asked the tenants to pay 20 years' purchase; and 22 to 23 years' purchase of second-term rents—that is to say, of rents reduced by 20 per cent for the first term and by 22 per cent more for the second term below the original unreduced rental for which Mr. Davitt asked the tenants to pay 20 years' purchase. And to pay it, too, not to become proprietors, as under the Act of 1903, but to acquire some problematical lease of land, which would be the property not of the farmers, but of the community in general.

Sexton's phrase, "The Irish Party was as solid as the trunk of an oak." Parnell himself, above all, treated the new departure and its author with a personal indulgence and an assiduous patience all his own. It was only in very strict intimacy he dropped one or two *aigre-doux* observations, like this (in reference to the Liverpool speech): "If I were Davitt, I should never define. The moment he becomes intelligible, he is lost." Nobody suffered contradiction more equably from a man of Mr. Davitt's fine character, so long as it dealt with controversies "in the air." Suffering is the most powerful of all arguments with the Irish people; and what an Irish audience saw and loved in Mr. Davitt was not his theories, but the nine years' penal servitude of the man, who, in his Manchester speech, could speak of himself, with a pathos that went straight to the Irish heart, as "the son of an Irish peasant, who was refused the shelter of an Irish workhouse by Irish Landlordism; the son of an Irish mother, who had to beg through the streets of England for bread for me." Parnell spoke with, and at that time genuinely felt, a personal tenderness for that captivating simplicity and loftiness of purpose in Mr. Davitt's character which were the all-sufficing atonement for his restiveness at awkward moments. Even in the warning he felt it necessary to address to the people of the United States against the dangers of the new campaign, he couched it in terms so cordial, that Mr.

Davitt triumphantly quoted it in America as proof that there was no real difference between them.

"I believe," he said, in an interview with the *New York Herald*, "that Mr. Davitt is simply desirous of testing public opinion in Ireland with regard to this matter, and when he finds, as I believe he will find, that a large majority of his own people are not inclined to depart from the old lines, he, with that public spirit, integrity, and desire for union which have so distinguished his career, will see that the interests of Ireland can best be served by working out the results to which we have been devoting our energies since the beginning of the movement."

Mr. Davitt was amazed to find, on his arrival in America, that his Manchester and Liverpool speeches, with their enunciation of a new and unauthorised programme, and their scarcely veiled thrusts at the policy of the Kilmainham Treaty and of the Parliamentary Party, had created a general disquiet, which his enemies had not been slow to translate into the coarsest and most unjust imputations of wilful dissension and treachery to Parnell. To these brutalities he responded with an excusable heat, crying out, at the meeting in the New York Academy of Music—after defending his right to hold his own opinions, while indignantly denying that there was or could be "any rivalry or jealousy between him and Mr. Parnell, the head of the movement, inside Parliament and outside it"<sup>1</sup>—"If these

<sup>1</sup> His way of disposing of the suspicion that he was disputing the leadership with Mr. Parnell was a singular one on the part of a Democrat. He argued "the thing is impossible, because Mr. Parnell is an aristocrat and I am the son of an Irish peasant."



answers are not enough, I shall make no more. If I am to be branded as a felon by the English Government for my utterances, and denounced by the Irish for them, I shall resign, I shall leave a party so ungrateful. I owe nothing to the Land League. The Land League is in debt to me. If traitors and slanderers are to be permitted to hound me in this way, I shall consult my own interests and retire from the fight." This, however, his countrymen found with relief was only the ebullition of a pardonably angry hour. To a *New York Herald* interviewer, who brusquely put it to him—"Not a few thoughtful men, Mr. Davitt, fancy that this new departure of yours is ill-timed. They do not take kindly to the doctrine of the Nationalisation of the Land," he replied with the most explicit assurance that "this particular scheme of land reform was not intended by me as an opposite scheme to any that might be entertained by Mr. Parnell"; and when asked, "Will you preach this doctrine of the Nationalisation of the Land during your stay in this country?" put an end to all uneasiness by the reply, "Only incidentally. It is not a hobby of mine by any means." The Manchester and Liverpool programme was, in fact, never pushed further. Mr. George, who rather uncivilly remarked that "The Irish burn like chips, the English burn like coal," soon returned to America, having failed to strike a spark even out of his admired English coalfields.

Meanwhile the landlord minority were availing themselves of the Phoenix Park reaction to carry out their eviction schemes with more ferocity than ever, and every vestige of public liberty was suppressed in order to make straight their paths. Although the No-Rent Manifesto was now definitely withdrawn—nay, shame to say, *because* it was withdrawn—the eviction campaign recommenced on such a scale that, during the debates on the Coercion Bill, Gladstone was constrained to say that Parnell “was accurate” in saying that “close upon a thousand Irish families per week were now being exterminated.” He acquiesced in the confession wrung from the new Chief Secretary, Mr. George Otto Trevelyan, that “the very magistrates and police in many instances describe the evictions as cases of hardship,” and in his indignant declaration that many of the landlords were “insisting on asserting their rights in a cruel and unpatriotic manner.” It is quite true that the Landlord Invincibles were putting the screw upon the Government as ruthlessly as those of the Phoenix Park did upon Parnell. “Oh for one hour of Cromwell!” was the cry of the principal landlord organ. Here is how the *Evening Mail* treated the Chief Secretary’s humane remonstrance against the brutal selfishness of the exterminators:—

The cowardly and crime-inciting language of the Chief Secretary for Ireland in regard to the conduct of Irish landlords is, as we anticipated it would, bearing fruit. No unpatriotic and cruel landlord has yet, it is true, fallen

a victim to the rifle which Mr. Trevelyan so efficiently assisted to charge. The mischief, however, was done when the gun was loaded, etc.

Far from repenting of the "cruel and unpatriotic" conduct which had excited the new Chief Secretary's disgust, a syndicate of wealthy landowners, with a capital of several millions, under the title of the Land Corporation, was formed to extend and organise these inhuman proceedings under the shelter of the new Coercion regime. The language of the prospectus of the Land Corporation made no disguise of the object. It was to "disinfect" districts touched by the Land League contagion, to "clear them of their Land League inhabitants," and to "plant them with loyal tenants from other countries"—in a word, to challenge and force the Irish people into what their principal organ in the Press described as "a war to the death."

The Land Corporation found their most efficient accomplices in a horde of law officers, scrambling for the £120,000 a year to which the vote for law charges and prosecutions now rose, and in the band of half-crazy ex-Indian officers—who were at one hour of the day Judges with a boundless summary jurisdiction, and the next hour heading police charges or giving the word for a volley of buckshot—to whom the local preservation of the peace was entrusted. The result was that the unfortunate Chief Secretary, who shrank, with all the sensitiveness of a peculiarly sensitive soul, from the cruelty and unpatriotic



selfishness of the exterminators and their Castle abettors, nevertheless found himself their helpless instrument in inaugurating a White Terror which was to bring years of misery and remorse upon himself and upon Earl Spencer, his Lord-Lieutenant—a man of no less delicate honour and of firmer texture. The pretext was “restoring public respect for law and order”; the real purpose was a campaign of landlord vengeance for Gladstone’s Land Act—“to put a stop to the blackmail of unreasonable abatements” was the Land Corporation’s way of putting it—conducted under the ægis of Gladstone’s lieutenants, with the help of all the legal rabblement who flourish by Irish disturbance. To keep up in England the notion of a country seething with crime, Scotland Yard was induced to delegate two of its Criminal Investigation Inspectors to guard the Prime Minister. The cellars of the Cork Court-house were searched the day before the Summer Assizes as for a new Gunpowder Plot. Even Cardinal M’Cabe was put under the indignity of police protection at his house in Dublin, owing, as it was pretended, to his outspoken denunciations of the Phoenix Park murders, until an indignant protest from His Eminence caused the cessation of the outrage. The jails were visited in the search for informers by the aid of threats and bribes; vast sums were offered as police rewards for the discovery of old crimes, or, as is now perfectly certain, for the organisation of new ones.

The ground thus prepared, the Summer Assizes were turned into a shambles where bands of prisoners, many guilty and many (the Crown officials themselves now confess) innocent, were brought before tribunals packed at any risk, hit or miss, to furnish the gallows with victims, in order to expiate the murders of the previous years. The original design of the Coercion Act—to entrust the trials to a tribunal of three Judges without a jury—came to nought, owing to the resistance of the Judges themselves, one of whom, Baron Fitzgerald, a man of austere constitutional temper, resigned his place on the Bench rather than stoop to the function, and another of whom, of a coarser breed, Chief Justice Morris, responded, "I'm damned if I'll turn hangman!"

The Three-Judge device would, at least, have saved us from the more indecent machinery of jury-packing, on which the Crown was obliged to fall back for its verdicts. The spirit in which this foul practice was approached was graphically expressed by the *Daily Telegraph* in its declaration: "We must, to convict murderers, secure, by hook or crook, by law or challenge, metropolitan, Protestant, and loyal juries"—the murderers being any peasants who were put in the dock under any cloud of reasonable suspicion as murderers. One of the first victims "by hook or crook" was a youth of excellent family in the county of Clare, Francis Hynes, who was charged with shooting an old man named Doloughty, on the public road, without any agrarian motive

that the Crown could suggest. A shot that had reached the brain left the old man barely able to mumble out a few words, so disconnected that the priest did not feel justified in administering the Last Sacraments. The whole case against the prisoner turned upon the evidence of a Resident Magistrate, who saw the dying man after the priest, and stated that he heard him utter the name of "Francey Hynes" as his last words. Out of a panel of thirty-eight jurors, the Crown ordered twenty-six Catholic jurors to "stand aside," and a "metropolitan, Protestant, and loyal" jury was thus duly empanelled, its foreman being a Captain Hamilton, the Secretary of the Land Corporation, who had just entered on their campaign to "clear infected districts of their Land League inhabitants, and to plant them with loyal tenants from other countries." On the first night of the trial, the jury were accommodated for the night at the Imperial Hotel, in which I had become a lodger since my release from Kilmainham. I was awakened in the middle of the night by an uproar in the corridor outside my bedroom. The door was thrust in, and a man with a candle in his hand staggered into the room at the head of two or three companions, equally drunk and boisterous. I jumped out of bed with some words of anger. The revellers precipitately retreated. I rang for the night porter, who told me that the disturbers were members of the Hynes jury, and that they had been going



riotously through the house, demanding drink, and endeavouring to break into the bedroom of a lady lodger on the opposite side of the corridor. The next morning I thought it my duty to relate, in a letter to the *Freeman*, my experience of how the Hynes jury had passed the night, while a human life was hanging on their word. Either the jurors or their accuser had behaved scandalously. To put the accuser on proof of his allegations would seem to have been the first duty of an Executive sensitive for the fair repute of public justice. It afterwards turned out that the Crown Solicitor, Mr. Morphy, did actually go to the Imperial Hotel to inquire into my allegations, and found himself face to face with overwhelming testimony of their truth. No less than eleven witnesses stated then, what they subsequently swore, and what, indeed, the foreman, Captain Hamilton, subsequently confessed, that a group of the jurors spent the night drinking with strangers in the public billiard-room, and that at least one of them was "calling loudly," "making more noise than was absolutely necessary," and paying nocturnal visits to the bedrooms. The billiard-marker mentioned the names of no less than four persons, not members of the jury, who were drinking whiskey and champagne with the jurors, and participating in the midnight disorders. The lady lodger, Miss Carbery, sister of one of the most distinguished members of the Jesuit order, thus describes the scene in her affidavit.

Several persons were taking part in the disturbance. They came to my door several times and turned the handle. They kicked at the door again and again. I thought they would smash the fanlight over the door by knocking at it with their knuckles. Only that my door was locked, I believe that they would have forced it in. From their boisterous conduct I believe that they must have been under the influence of drink. When I read Mr. O'Brien's letter I thought he described their conduct very mildly. The disturbance continued from about 12 to 12.30 o'clock.

Appalled by the evidence thus thrust upon him, the Crown Solicitor—far from sifting its truth by a public inquiry—made up his mind to make inquiry impossible by proceeding for “contempt of court” not against the writer of the letter, but against Mr. Gray, M.P., for publishing it. By one of the startling contrasts of Irish life, Gray was High Sheriff of the court before which he was now summoned to answer. He faced his responsibilities with a superb courage, and justified himself in a speech which made even the ranks of Tuscany hang their heads in admiring meanness. But to listen to argument, much less to admit evidence, was the last thought of a tribunal specially constructed to strike terror and to “convict by hook or crook.” When the proceedings commenced, I stood up in court and announced myself as the writer of the letter, and claimed some opportunity of establishing its truth by public evidence. The Judge flew at me with the judicial temper of a wild cat. I was

instantly hurled out of court. Gray's speech was of no avail, except to aggravate the penalty. The choleric Judge Lawson, who presided, answered him with a harangue of browbeating insolence, declaring the accusation against the jury, upon the investigation of which he shut the door, and the substantial truth of which the foreman of the jury subsequently admitted, to be a "thorough invention." Justice was vindicated by sending the High Sheriff to prison for three months, and inflicting a fine of £500 upon his newspaper. Every public cry for investigation was stifled with the mailed fist; Francey Hynes was duly convicted and hanged; and one of the Crown Counsel of the day, The MacDermot, who was the Attorney-General of a later administration, confessed to me sixteen years afterwards that subsequent inquiry had convinced him that a judicial error had been committed, and that it was a relative of Francey Hynes, and not Francey Hynes, who had committed the murder.

From the Court-house at Green Street, where Gray had just been sentenced, I walked over to the City Hall, to see the Freedom of the City conferred on Messrs. Parnell and Dillon. Mr. Dillon had spoken only once in Ireland since the Kilmainham Treaty, and uneasy rumours of his retirement from public life were continuously circulating. It was with a profound sense of relief that the Irish people saw him take his stand by the Chief in this hour of



extremity. Whatever his differences with Parnell on other matters, his knowledge of the practical needs of Irish life had saved him from being smitten at any time with the theories of Mr. George, while his intensity of conviction, his effectiveness on the field of action, and the gentle charm of character he concealed under a cold exterior and a remorselessness of language, constituted him a unique figure among the National forces of his time. The scene in the City Hall, following in an hour or two the orgy of triumphant tyranny in the Green Street Court-house, threw a strange light upon the gulf that had again opened between Ireland and her rulers. The irrepressible force of the Irish Cause was attested by the mere fact that the Freedom of the City, which was refused a few months previously by the casting vote of one Lord Mayor, was now presented by a new and Nationalist Lord Mayor, speaking for a Nationalist majority, purified and replenished. For all that, the celebration marked perhaps the lowest point of depression to which the popular movement was sunk by the Phoenix Park reaction. Parnell, in his speech, confessed plainly that public life in Ireland was rendered impossible for the three years during which the new Coercion Act was to last. To speak, to write, or to combine, no matter how guardedly, to be seen abroad after dark, to object to the irruption of a policeman into one's bedroom at any hour of the night, was to run the risk of fine and imprisonment without trial, or

by a form of trial fouler than none. Their Castle lawyers and police pro-consuls had managed to persuade Earl Spencer and Mr. Trevelyan that examples had to be made and blood avenged by blood, if society was to be saved ; and they were to learn, by the experience of three hideous years, that they were dealt with as marionettes by the subordinates of whom they supposed themselves to be the masters.

It was not that Parnell was in the least deflected from his purpose, but that matters had come to such a point that he had no better message than that of the beaten Italian after Villafranca, "Brothers, we must wait!" On the same evening there was a long consultation at Morrison's Hotel with a number of the recently released suspects, who had come up from every part of the country for the celebration at the City Hall. One of the party was Mr. Tim Harrington, whose stubborn courage and masterful energy at the head of the organisation in Kerry had long marked him out for the larger part he was henceforth to play on the Nationalist *état-major*. Another was the already grey-headed Matt Harris, of Ballinasloe, who combined the solemnity of a judge with the juvenile devil-may-careishness of a volunteer for a forlorn hope. It was a rather dismal exchange of confidences as to the collapse of the people's organisation, the unbridled insults of their local tyrants, and their own deep discouragement, all leading up to

the conclusion that "something must be done"—nobody specified exactly what. Parnell listened, as was his wont, until everybody had put in his plaint. Then he delivered himself of this remarkable judgment: "I see nothing for it except to 'duck' for these three years, and then—ah—resume."

There was a general murmur from us *jeunes moustaches*, as well as from the *vieille barbe* of Balinasloe. It would be ruin, demoralisation, disgrace; better fill the jails again than that. Whereupon Parnell, with his pretty smile, spoke his fiery young barbarians thus: "My dear Harrington, I don't intend to go to jail again myself, but I have not the least objection that anybody else should go."

When our friends from the country had departed, unsubdued but not in very cheerful spirits, Parnell and myself sat together far into the night in his room, and had some serious conversation. I told him I did not in the least misapprehend his jocular hint as to the policy of the future; that having cut Slander's head off by going to jail once, and trying the No-Rent policy fairly out, I quite agreed that a second imprisonment for him would be an anti-climax, which could have no effect except a depressing one, and that all the world would know it was not the pusillanimity of a timid commander, but the wisdom of a prudent one, that left men in a less responsible situation to expose themselves



in the line of fire. All I wanted was to be sure that those who might advance to the line of fire and draw the fire would not be contravening any policy he might deem more effective with an eye to the future ; for, should it be otherwise, nothing would induce me either to advance one step without his sanction or, on the other hand, to depart an inch from the lines on which *United Ireland* had been started, so long as I remained responsible for its management. The time was come for telling him—I am afraid at what must have seemed a presumptuous length in a comparative novice—that I did not attach a fig's worth of importance to the criticisms on the Kilmainham Treaty—that it was, in my poor judgment, the most amazing success an imprisoned Irish leader, in a particularly tight corner, had ever won over a conquering English Government ; and better than a success of strategy, a success of statesmanship ;—that if Gladstone's side of the bargain had been carried out in the spirit in which he first announced it to the House of Commons, Parnell would have no more enthusiastic ally than I in insisting that no obstacle must be presented from the Irish side, but that the country, after its tremendous effort, and with its forces in better heart than ever, should be allowed gradually to broaden down into a friendlier and more conciliatory spirit, in which the reorganisation of the Irish Government foreshadowed by the Prime Minister would fatally culminate in Home Rule ;—but that the

Phoenix Park murders, and the savage spirit of reprisals they had roused among the dominant classes in England and Ireland, had changed all that; that all the devils had been let loose again between the two nations; that even Gladstone and his Government, in going back to Forster's methods and allowing themselves to be whirled along in the blind rush of English prejudices, at the cry of a brutally selfish landlord minority, left the country, which he treated as a nation of bloodthirsty Invincibles, no alternative but to strike back or go under; that to silently acquiesce in such a wrong would be to leave the administration of the Land Act wholly at the landlords' mercy, to abandon the field to the secret societies, and, in fact, leave the Invincibles the depositories of the duty of Irish resistance. Finally, that if defiance, open, systematic, and remorseless, of the new Coercion regime in any way contravened his own plans for the future, he had only to say the word and no act of mine should ever be found in conflict with his judgment; but that he would easily understand that *United Ireland*, if it was to be conducted in a more pacific spirit, would have to be conducted by other hands than mine.

The reply was reassuring and decisive. "My dear O'Brien," he said, "you have scarcely said a word in which you and I are not at one. When have you found me to presume to meddle in the management of *United Ireland*? Depend upon

it, you never shall. Of course, somebody's got to break these animals' jaws," he said, in one of those rushing sentences that had the swish of a storm as they broke through his teeth; and then he added some affectionate words about his anxiety lest I should be swept away as ruthlessly as John Mitchel was, placing his hand upon my shoulder with a gentle pressure, which was the utmost stretch of personal tenderness I ever saw him exhibit. But he was clear that he himself had to move with the utmost circumspection, if even any skeleton of popular organisation was to be kept standing. It was after a long hesitation he consented to summon a meeting in the Dublin Mansion House for the purpose of inaugurating a Fund for the Evicted Tenants. In the requisition which I drafted at his request for the purpose, we based ourselves carefully upon the provocative action of the Land Corporation Company in launching a movement "which will possibly involve the eviction of a considerable number of the Irish people whom recent legislation does not protect"; and it was even thought necessary to declare that "the movement which is now proposed for the relief of evicted families will not be of a political character." When, after this tentative step had been successfully taken, during the summer, a National Convention was at last summoned for October to re-establish the popular organisation under the title of "The National League," the word "Convention" was deliberately dropped and



the modest term "Conference" substituted for the gathering. National dejection had ebbed so low, and the White Terrorists of the Castle had become so bold in daring anything against popular liberty, that on the day before the Conference was to assemble, it was still doubtful whether that evening's *Dublin Gazette* would not contain a proclamation forbidding it.

Before things got even thus far, Parnell had to execute one of the most delicate *coups* of his life in regulating accounts with the Ladies' Land League. The ladies had themselves displayed so intrepid a spirit in the No-Rent struggle, that they were naturally among the severest critics of the Kilmainham Treaty, and formed and expressed judgments more incisive than complimentary as to the more unheroic calculations of "the men." They were, besides (and it was the point that impressed Parnell most), the administrators of the Land League funds, and were distributing them at a rate which alarmed that most prudent of Chancellors of the Exchequer. Shortly after their release from Kilmainham, he and Mr. Dillon paid a visit to the Ladies' Land League Offices, to discuss the financial situation. By a delicious trait of feminine "colour," the young ladies, who, unsalaried and to a great extent unthanked, spent their days and evenings laboriously immersed in the books and accounts of the League, constantly liable to prosecutions, police assaults, and admonitions more

cruel still from eminent personages of their own household, had introduced into the League Office a piano, with which they sometimes beguiled the tedium of their work. As the two ex-Kilmainham prisoners mounted the stairs, the young ladies grouped themselves around the piano, and hailed the leaders with the gentle, if somewhat sarcastic strains of "Twenty love-sick maidens we," from a comic opera of Sullivan's, which was at the time all the rage. Parnell smiled, and softly came to business. In his sister, Miss Anna Parnell, who was the soul of the League, he found his own tenacity of purpose, with very nearly all his own genius for command. The ladies held out stoutly against his parsimonious counsels. He had his cruel masculine revenge. He quietly walked across, after his interview with the ladies, and cut off their account at the Hibernian Bank. Deeply though she loved her brother, I don't think Miss Parnell ever saw him again during his life. The Ladies' League took advantage of the formation of the new National League to dissolve their own Association. They were as truly heroic a band of women as ever a country had the happiness to possess in an hour of stress. They unquestionably deserve the largest share of credit for breaking Mr. Forster's power in a winter when even pretty resolute men's hearts beat low. Nobody appreciated more truly than Parnell their daring and unselfishness. It was his financial soul alone that saw any defect in their operations.

In the lean years that he knew were coming, it was always with a chuckle he recalled that he had "managed to save a nest-egg in the Paris Funds," and to his foresight in removing the League Funds out of the grip of English attachments, and husbanding a considerable reserve of them for the future, is incontestably due the impregnability of his movement.



## CHAPTER XIX

### THE NATIONAL LEAGUE

1882

THE eve of the National Conference was signalised by perhaps the heaviest blow of all for those who were endeavouring to piece the shattered National forces together. Mr. Dillon's resignation of his seat for Tipperary, and withdrawal from public life, long apprehended, was now publicly announced. His health had been deeply undermined, and in retiring for a long residence on a ranch in Colorado, he took care to minimise by his personal friendliness towards Parnell the discouraging effect of his disappearance. We strove to reassure the country by declaring in *United Ireland* that—

We have the very best authority for announcing that there is not the slightest foundation for the statements, in the English and the Irish Tory newspapers, that Mr. Dillon's resignation is attributable to any difference of opinion with Mr. Parnell. On the contrary, we are aware that about a week before Mr. Dillon published his letter to the people of Tipperary, he, with Mr. Davitt and Mr. Brennan, had a conference with Mr. Parnell at Avondale,

at which a cordial agreement was come to at all points as to the future policy of the National Party. Mr. Dillon's resignation is occasioned solely by the condition of his health.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, the disappearance of a leader so trusted and beloved at such an hour caused an instinctive shudder to run through the Irish people's dejected ranks. No number of assurances could allay the disquiet caused by his absence from the Antient Concert Room on the eventful day. When the Conference assembled, it was made only too plain that the preliminary accord established at Avondale was a fragile one. Parnell was only freed from his apprehension that the Conference would be suppressed *manu militari*, to find himself face to face with a more violent outbreak than ever of the old quarrel between the Land Nationalisers and the Parliamentary Party. Mr. Davitt attended the Conference with a considerable following, principally from the North, who made up by their fervour for their weakness in numbers. The assembly was early interpenetrated with that electric excitement which, in the first deliberative essays of all countries, and of Ireland in particular, so often tends to the forgetfulness of great issues in the heat of personal emotions. Mr. Davitt's general attitude at the time was that of a pessimist, who confessed to "an ugly feeling arising from the contemplation how little has resulted from

<sup>1</sup> *United Ireland*, September 30, 1882.

the great agitation which has been carried on for three or four years. . . . In fact, a mountain of agitation has only brought forth a mouse of a Land measure." But he did not at the National Conference renew the somewhat acrid criticisms of his speech of the previous Sunday in Wexford. The speech of Parnell himself was of a sternly business-like character. He spoke under a deep sense that it was not a time for oratorical effervescence, and yet with the tranquil assurance of a man who, even in the midst of a tempest of coercion, was laying the foundations of a movement that would build up every department of the National Life—agrarian, industrial, and political. Mr. Davitt's speech on the general programme enunciated by Parnell only occupied a few minutes. He declared that "in claiming the right to advocate my own principles, I am in no way in antagonism with Mr. Parnell or his policy"; and announced that, as part of the understanding come to between Mr. Dillon, Mr. Brennan, and himself and Mr. Parnell at Avondale, as to the action he should take at the Conference: "I agreed that, while I could not conscientiously advocate the principle underlying his platform on the Land question, I would not divide this Conference or raise any discussion with his plan of settlement."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In view of the onslaughts made upon the terms of Land Purchase agreed to by the Land Conference of 1903, it is interesting to read the far more modest demands put forward by Parnell as comprehending a satisfactory settlement of the Land question.



That kind of nervous applause which sounds like a great sigh of relief broke from the Conference. It was upon the subsidiary question of the constitution of the National Council for the government of the new League that the storm burst. The issue was so little practical that the Council, which nearly wrecked the Conference in a dispute as to its constitution, was, as a matter of fact, never formed. The official proposal was that the new League was to be governed by a council of thirty, of whom a third were to be selected by the Parliamentary Party. Mr. Davitt and his friends pressed, by way of amendment, that each of the thirty-two counties should elect a representative apiece—a Member of Parliament, if they saw fit—but that the Parliamentary Party should have no special representation of their own. The amendment instantly kindled

Replying to a demand of Mr. Mat Harris for compulsory purchase, and his objection to the extension of the period of purchase from 35 years to 63 years (only 5 years less than the 68 years of the Wyndham Act), he explained that under the system of purchase he proposed, the tenants would pay 20 years' purchase of first judicial rents upon terms that would reduce their annual payments by 25 per cent for 63 years, after which their payments would cease; and he added: "The system that we propose is one which is so mutually advantageous both to the tenant and to the landlord, that if we could get the Legislature to accept it, I confidently believe that it would not be necessary to put compulsion upon the landlords to sell, or to adopt the principle of compulsory purchase; so therefore, I say, let us wait and see whether the landlords will sell voluntarily under the amended system that we propose." Under the Land Conference recommendations the tenant would receive a reduction not of 25 per cent, but of 40 per cent, for practically the same term, while the landlord would receive (and not at the tenant's expense) a bonus of 5 years' purchase—a crowning inducement to sell which Parnell had not dared to suggest to the Legislature of that day.

two dangerous passions—a conflict between North and South—since it was pointed out that the effect would be to give a few Branches in Down or Antrim the same power as three or four hundred Branches in Cork or Tipperary—and the question of confidence or no confidence in the Parliamentary Party. Mr. Davitt vehemently insisted upon the democratic principle of direct election by the people.<sup>1</sup> He found himself once more compelled to protest his loyalty to Mr. Parnell, and “hurled back in Mr. O'Connor's teeth” the imputation that his proposal covered any vote of censure on the Parliamentarians ; but Mr. T. P. O'Connor, in one of those speeches which only save a country from a crisis by seeming to precipitate it, pointed out that, while “he could not see into Mr. Davitt's bosom,” the practical result of his amendment would be either to flood the Council with Members of Parliament, and so exclude local men of worth, or to

<sup>1</sup> The democratic principles of direct election and complete self-government in every Parliamentary Division of the country were established by the constitution of the United Irish League with a fulness Mr. Davitt had not dared to contemplate in his proposals of October 1882. The only undemocratic clause of the constitution of the United Irish League (inserted sorely against the will of its draughtsman) is one admitting ten non-elected but co-opted men and six non-elected but co-opted officials to a practically predominant power in the governing body of the League. It is one of life's little ironies, that Mr. Davitt and Mr. Dillon should be two of the non-elected, co-opted members of the Directory of the United Irish League, in contradiction to the democratic principles so vehemently contended for twenty years before, and should have thought themselves justified, in that capacity, in “launching a determined campaign” against the Policy of Conciliation unanimously adopted by the elected members of that body.

expose the Parliamentary Party, who had the heaviest responsibility on the field of fight, to the possibility of being obliged to support some policy they knew to be pernicious, at the dictation of a body on which they would have no representation. The speech, and Mr. Davitt's angry interruptions, raised the temper of the assembly to a point at which even Parnell's serenity found some difficulty in keeping it from boiling over; but the danger, when at its worst, was put an end to by an unlooked-for and peculiarly Irish *dénouement*: Mr. Davitt, to prove the injustice of Mr. O'Connor's imputation of hostility to the Parliamentary Party, indignantly withdrew his amendment. An Irish assembly, ever readier to dwell upon the impulsive generosity of an action than upon its strict logical causation, cheered with all its soul, and a Conference that lasted without a break from a quarter to twelve in the forenoon to a quarter to eight o'clock in the evening, ended in a general hand-shake.

We all—and nobody so assiduously as Parnell—did our best to treat the differences with the Land Nationalisers as tenderly as possible, and in particular to surround Mr. Davitt's name, and even his foibles, with an inviolable respect. He remained a member of the Organising Committee, charged with propagating the new League, but seldom attended, and never, in matter of fact, took any systematic interest in the work of the National



League. Beyond an occasional speech of a general character, oftenest in the great towns of Britain, and mostly flavoured with a sub-acid criticism of whatever active policy happened to be for the moment in possession of the field, he took little part in the tremendous three years' conflict, that changed an administration of remorseless Coercionists into convinced Home Rulers. To complete the misfortunes of the time, the uneasy apprehensions with which events in Ireland had been filling the Irish-American mind ended with dissensions which paralysed for a time all hope from that quarter. As early as May 31st, the leaders of the movement in New York had cabled to Parnell the following perturbed message :—

Reported dissension between yourself, Dillon, and Davitt most discouraging. Extreme policy deemed perilous. United moderate action we are convinced is desired by Irish America. (Signed) W. B. Wallace, Hugh King, John Rooney, Constantine Maguire, John Devoy, Andrew Walsh, John Breslin, John C. Maguire.

The Mr. John Devoy who was one of the signatories was the author of the famous "New Departure" letters, which had been, perhaps, the most powerful influence in the foundation of the Land League, since they signified the fusion of the Irish Republican Brotherhood with the Constitutionalists in its support. He and Mr. Davitt had unfortunately drifted apart from friendship to coldness, and from coldness to bitter antagonism, with

results that the friends of both of them, and indeed their country, had reason to deplore. Mr. Davitt's other friend of renown in the United States, Mr. Patrick Forde, of the *Irish World*, remained unalterably attached to his fortunes. To the decisions of the National Conference, ignoring the doctrines of No-Rent and of Nationalisation of the Land in the foundation of the New League, he responded by declaring the Land League to be dead, and shutting the columns of the *Irish World* to any further appeal for funds for the home organisation, which had "abandoned the original line of policy." The main body of the League in America stood firm, and retorted with vigour upon Mr. Forde's pretensions to speak for a population which was essentially moderate in its views and unshakable in its belief in Parnell's capacity as a leader. The net result, however, was that the two conflicting schools for years neutralised one another's usefulness in the well-nigh hopeless struggle that was being waged at home. Mr. Forde's powerful paper drifted into the organ of a terrorist conspiracy which undertook to reply with dynamite in the towns of England to the terrorism of the hangings and ferocious repression going on in Ireland. And it became one of Parnell's new anxieties that, in the exasperation caused by the suppression of all public liberty in Ireland, the hotter spirits even of the Irish-American organisation which remained faithful, listened more and more to the counsels of

desperation and mingled in designs whose extent and character he could but vaguely conjecture.

For the two next ensuing years—what between Parnell's almost continuous absence in England, Mr. Dillon's removal to Colorado, Mr. Davitt's inactivity, or activity only in the domain of censure, and the restriction of Mr. Sexton's and Mr. T. P. O'Connor's superb abilities to the field of Parliamentary debate—it is the bare truth to say that *United Ireland* had to run the all but exclusive risk of keeping the torch of public liberty alight. Every number that was issued might have been its last. Its one source of safety was the knowledge in Dublin Castle of the recklessness of consequences on the part of its conductors. It was one illustration more of the truth: *Una salus victis nullam sperare salutem*. The paper only survived the prosecution for one seditious libel by replying with a dozen fresh ones. To the adventures of a journal that had twenty members of its staff at the same moment in Her Majesty's prisons, and produced clandestine editions in seven cities of England, Scotland, and France, it was now to add the trial of its editor before "a loyal Protestant jury," empanelled to "convict him by hook or crook" in Green Street; a series of merciless fines for contempt of court; and a succession of libel actions by high Castle officials, who claimed no less than £75,000 damages in all from the paper they had failed to intimidate by imprisonment, or by police



raids to break up its formes or confiscate its sheets in the streets or news-shops. The terror spread among the Castle terrorists by our audacity was intensified by the knowledge that we were not without confederates among the subordinate Crown officials in Her Majesty's printing-office, and even in the secret police, who enabled us to look into the very penetralia of the Castle, and in many vital emergencies to confront them with their own inmost secrets in remorseless type.

Mr. Healy, from his first post as the contributor of a Parliamentary Letter, had come to be my constant and most redoubtable auxiliary in these wild wars. "Here," he remarked one day to Mr. Justin M'Carthy in our room at *United Ireland* office, "we compose our little salads. O'Brien supplies the oil and I pour in the vinegar." He was, indeed, throughout these turbulent years one of the most fearless of *sabreurs* and one of the most delightful of comrades—pitiless as a public executioner with his pen, but ever ready with his mad joke or chirpy laugh amidst the smoke of battle. Our writings were the lightest portion of our work. He was reading in his dogged way for the Bar, amidst the crash of worlds, and I had to spend half the week supervising, in the smallest particulars, a commercial business which was to me as hateful as if the ledgers were cages of wild beasts, but which, nevertheless, by some strange freak of destiny, I managed to conduct with success under circumstances that

threatened weekly bankruptcy and ruin. As time went on, we had also to do the principal part of whatever public speech-making was going on, in concert with Mr. Harrington, who had now become the principal Secretary and strong right arm of the National League. His was a gingerly task, for any display of energy on the part of the infant League might have caused its instant suppression. That, under such conditions, he should have managed to save the League for better times from the stroke of the Castle despots, and at the same time displayed the public spirit that consigned him in person to a plank bed for three months in Mullingar Jail, is a testimony to the mixture of sagacity and stubborn courage which is the mainspring of his character. For many months he and Mr. Healy and myself were accustomed to distribute ourselves every Sunday among whatever meagre public meetings were to be had. We would leave Dublin by the night mail-trains on Saturday night, get in to our destination—some place as westerly as Ballina or as far south as Tralee—towards three or four o'clock, perhaps, of an icy winter's morning, spend the day orating to a somewhat cowed little assembly—as often as not under a drenching downpour of rain—waste the evening in the scarcely more exhilarating delights of a rustic “banquet,” and return to Dublin by Sunday's night-mail train, reaching Kingsbridge or Broadstone as the day was breaking. On Tuesday we had to turn up again to “fill

the bill" at the meeting of the Central Branch of the National League.

*United Ireland* had to go to press on Wednesday night, and not infrequently when Mr. Healy and I appeared at the office on Wednesday morning, we would find Mr. Donnelly, the foreman, awaiting us in his shirt-sleeves, like a ruddy spectre, wringing his hands and declaring that he had not yet a line of "editorial matter" wherewith to face the night's publication. Whereupon we would fall to work—Mr. Healy at one side of the *escritoire* and myself at the other—and divide up our subjects, and exchange stimulating suggestions, and pursue one another page after page in a sort of steeple-chase, until the gloom on the faithful Donnelly's face relaxed, as he gathered leading articles and paragraphs into his net in an ever-increasing mass of manuscript—my own undecipherable by any except certain initiated compositors, and Mr. Healy's plain as a schoolboy's, and—is it my envy that speaks?—as ugly. At six o'clock Mr. Donnelly would freely give us leave to go to dinner, which we took together at my quarters in the "Impayrial Hotel"; after which we would return to our seats at the *escritoire*, and write away against one another by the hour and by the column, until the abyss of twelve or fourteen editorial columns was full to the brim. Then Mr. Donnelly would reappear, hotter than ever, in his shirt-sleeves, as indignant now at the torrent of matter that was pouring in upon him



as he was in the morning at the thought of the two empty editorial pages. But on we wrote, and on, cajoling honest Donnelly, threatening him, but, by some miracle known only to the composing-room, always succeeding in crushing our quart into our pint-pot, until at last he would solve the difficulty by reappearing no more, and responding to our clamour for more space only by the first revolutions of the printing-machine. The Post Office clock was probably by that time chiming two or three o'clock, and we would return to the "Impayrial" with the jubilant feeling of duty done; and there, in the little back bar, or porter's room, which from the night porter's name came to have an almost national celebrity as "Hugh's kitchen," we would sit over the bottle of stout which was our invariable tippie, and Mr. Healy, who was a born night-bird, would proceed to begin the night with torchlight processions of wit and *bon diablerie* which would illuminate the room with a brighter light than Hugh's candle. So we would often remain until the day dawned, and the newspaper boys were heard in the street; whereupon we would read our paper, still wet from the press, and speculate whether Earl Spencer would reply to this or that leading article by suppressing the number, or whether Judge Lawson would hale us before his angry wig for some gross contempt of his Scroggs-like performances at the "Bloody Assize," or how many seditious libels or civil libels might be wrapped up in our

retort upon some almighty police despot. Often enough, indeed, before the day was done, there arrived the warrant or the solicitor's letter anticipated. If the prospect or the event never prevented me from sleeping a dreamless sleep, far into the day, on the top corridor of the "Impayrial," the fact must not be counted unto me for bravery. The recklessness which was my safety at the Castle was also the secret of my power to sleep untroubled in the midst of anxieties which cannot now at even this distance of time be recalled without a shiver. There was even an element of gaiety in the danger for a lonely man, oppressed with the sorrow and the injustices of life, who suddenly found himself in the rush of a noble battle for the poor and weak, where to fall seemed the easiest of duties, if not, indeed, the best of luxuries.







THE BLACKWATER AT ROCKFOREST, NEAR MALLOWS

## CHAPTER XX

### THE MALLOW ELECTION

1882-1883

IN the early summer of 1882 it got noised abroad that the Attorney-General, Mr. Johnson—a just but dull man, who never loved the House of Commons or was loved of it—was about to vacate his seat for Mallow for a Judgeship. To my stupefaction, I got a letter from Parnell pressing me to stand against the Law Adviser to the Castle, Mr. Naish, who was to be the official candidate for the vacant seat. Stupefaction is the only word I can find to describe my mingled feelings of confusion and repulsion. If the honour were to be presented to me on a silver salver, I am quite sure I should have instinctively turned from it with a shudder. It had never once occurred to me that my tongue could be other than a halting and stumbling instrument of affliction to myself and others. On the only occasion when I had addressed half-a-dozen connected sentences to a crowd (in the compulsive ardour of the Mitchel struggle long ago in Tip-

perary), the paroxysm was one which I should no more have expected or desired to return than if it had been an outbreak of somnambulism. Whatever wistful ambition the extinction of my household had left me centred around my pen, and required depths of shade and retirement for its wooing. To stand before a crowd to be its oracle had for me the terrors of standing in the public pillory, with the considerable advantage in favour of the man in the pillory, that he could not help it, and that he was not obliged to say anything. After thirty years of all-too-abundant public speaking, I still mount a public platform with scarcely less repulsion. It was, perhaps, rather sheepishness than modesty; but the feeling was and is unconquerable. There is, doubtless, an element of disease, if there is also a strong stimulant, in the state of mind which leads a public speaker to believe he must ever give the best that is in him, and that the best must ever be unequal to his task, but I was and am an incurable sufferer from that disease.

Anywhere else, my sense of incapacity for public life, my shrinking from the naked eye of publicity, would have been grievous enough; in relation to Mallow it amounted to downright terror—terror keener than I have felt in any of the numerous moments of not inconsiderable physical danger in my life. At this time of day, when popular power is too supreme to be even questioned in Ireland, it would be scarcely possible to give any adequate idea



of how audacious, how farcically impossible it then seemed that I should succeed in being member for Mallow. The whole electorate was less than 200. The agrarian motives which stirred great masses of county electors were entirely lacking in the small boroughs. For generations the seat had been trafficked between some local aristocrat and some great Castle placeman. Political considerations, least of all of the Nationalist school, entered not at all into the contest. The current price of votes—the number of nominations to Civil Service posts likely to be available—the counterplay of all sorts of corrupt or intimidatory local influences—alone decided the day. At that moment one ex-member for Mallow was Lord Chancellor of Ireland; another was about to become a Judge; the Castle candidate now named was to be a future Lord Chancellor. All the members for Mallow I could remember were either powerful placemen, local magnificoes, or English millionaires. So many young Mallow folks had found places at the Four Courts that the Rolls Court was known as “the Mallow Division of the High Court of Justice.” Parnell, who had in his daring way run a Nationalist candidate against the Attorney-General at the General Election of 1880, was ignominiously routed. It was unthinkable that, where he with his magnificent prestige had failed, success should be possible for one who still thought of Mallow as he had left it, as a place where friends were poor and aristocratic pretensions overwhelming;

where, if he were still remembered at all, he could only be remembered as an awkward, shambling schoolboy, whose claim to dispute the destinies of Mallow with wealthy placemen and haughty feudalists would probably excite more smiles than even indignation.

All this was, of course, quite unintelligible to Parnell. "I suppose you will get beaten," he said in one of his letters, "but you will get the least bad beating of anybody I know." In vain I strove to impress upon him that the pen was my only effective weapon, that my hatred of publicity was insuperable, that my candidature for Mallow was in a special manner a humiliating absurdity. In vain I suggested candidates who, as I then implicitly believed, were infinitely more likely to find favour with the electors of Mallow than I. He returned to the charge with a letter in which, after asking me "to reconsider your conclusion not to offer yourself," he added: "Nay, more. I would strongly urge upon you whether you ought not to do a signal service to the National cause by coming forward. Do kindly give the matter your best consideration and see if you cannot change your mind. It is of the greatest importance that we should get men of your stamp into the representation, and it would be an enormous triumph if we could carry this constituency." And he followed it up the next day with a further letter: "I urgently press upon you the necessity of reconsidering the matter, as nobody else can win the place."

My candidature for Mallow, like most of the principal developments of my fate, was decided without any volition of my own—almost in spite of me. As on nearly all the critical occasions of my life, also, I entered upon the Mallow fight unaccompanied and alone. Some brutally candid observations of Parnell as to the venality of the electors of Mallow, on the occasion of the defeat of his candidate, had made him so unpopular that it was thought wisest to keep him as far as possible away from the borough, and none of his lieutenants were likely to have much weight in a contest where whatever slender hopes the most sanguine could entertain arose from local and personal considerations. That the conquest of Mallow should be undertaken by a candidate who was as poor in speech as he was in pocket, and who would probably break down in his first attempt to address the public, was only one other forlorn element in an expedition whose desperation was now becoming almost its only attraction in my eyes. On my way to Mallow I paid a visit to Dr. Croke at Thurles. It was too late to consult him. Indeed, I knew only too well what would be the advice of one who knew Mallow as well as he knew his Breviary. But there was something in the hug of his burly friendship that rendered even his disapproval inspiring. As I anticipated, he was very angry with those who had forced me into the contest. In his purple-edged soutane he walked around and



around his garden like a king of the forest in his cage, as if trying to walk away from his indignation. Then he would come to a sudden stop and repeat : "You will be beaten. Parnell ought to know you will be beaten." I strove to reassure His Grace by suggesting that that was just what made the raid most tolerable in my eyes ; that I knew I was unfit for the work and hated it ; that probably the experiment of my visit would be so overwhelming a failure that the affair need go no further ; that nobody would be compromised except myself ; and that in any case there was nothing for it now but to go through. He would resume his stride and burst out again : "I know the people of Mallow. They're the kindest creatures on earth ; they're fit for heaven in everything—except politics. Yerra, man, an Irish borough would elect Barabbas for thirty pieces of silver." I gently intimated that I hoped with all my heart they would at least insist on getting their pieces in gold from the Castle man.

"Well, come to your dinner," he said at last, having walked me to the brink of desperation. The disagreeable subject once dismissed, the Archbishop, as usual, made his plain dinner-table all the evening sparkle like a more genial Attic feast-house for his guests. His priests he would always treat with the judicious indulgence of a big brother, and any intimate friend like myself, whom he would iocosely call "the Reverend William," was admitted to a familiarity which, I think, never led any dis-

criminating person for a moment to forget the intrinsic nobleness and seriousness of his character. He bubbled over that evening with stories of his episcopal experiences—trivial enough in cold print, but delightful in the rich flavour with which he narrated them. An ancient parish priest named Father Ned Ryan—the last of the old line of Irish priests who were walking libraries of classic learning, interpreted in the quaintest English—was once professor in the Thurles Seminary in its primitive days, and was expounding some fine passage to his class of Bœotian rustics, when the door opened and a donkey solemnly obtruded his long ears. The class gladly interrupted their studies to rush to put out the intruder. Father Ned shook his head mournfully as he watched them over his gold spectacles resuming their places. “He came unto his own,” he remarked, “and his own received him not.” Once, on one of his examinations of the children for Confirmation, the Archbishop put to a little girl the question from the Catechism: “What is the preparation for matrimony?” The little one blushed and giggled, and put the corner of her bib in her mouth by way of answer. The question was repeated. “Ah, sure, your lordship knows it yourself,” was the timid reply. “Yes, but you must tell me, my child. What is the preparation for matrimony?” “Well, my lord, a little courting, of course,” at last came the reluctant answer from amidst a rosery of blushes. On the occasion of a Visitation, His Grace

was upon one occasion addressing the people in his familiar way upon some defect in the parish schools, and said he had plenty of sympathy with the difficulties of the schoolmasters. "I was once a schoolmaster myself," he said, alluding to his professorship in Carlow College and his presidency of St. Colman's College, Fermoy, "and I never forgot the old saying of the Roman satirist, that him whom the gods hate they make a schoolmaster." "Begor, then, my lord, you got out of it purty well, whatever," he heard one of his audience confidentially whisper. And so on, through scores of tales of the simple drollery of the old rough, honest times, which left not an unlaughing face around the table except that of His Grace's monkey, whose solemn, weazened visage, red jacket, and unexpected pranks were the only terror connected with His Grace's hospitalities.

I spent the greater part of the night composing my speech of the morrow and committing it to memory. It sometimes seemed as if I really had something to say. But again the written word would seem to me as dead as Macaulay's "cold boiled veal," and still again it seemed certain I would remember never a word of it. But the situation was too desperate to leave much room for oratorical vanities. In the morning I found the Archbishop pacing up and down his garden in soutane and biretta, even more miserable than myself. He would stop to make some remark as to the hopelessness of the outlook, and then stride



forward as if to walk down his doubts. Then he disappeared, and on his return shoved a cheque for £100 into my hand. "And there is as much more where that came from," he remarked. I had no occasion to avail myself of the Archbishop's generosity, for, as will be seen hereafter, the election, which probably cost the Castle candidate £2500, cost me rather less than £5 all told; but the gift and the manner of it gave me one of the sweetest memories of my life, and the fact deserves to live as a stone in the monument that will yet record the greatness of the man.

As I was starting for the train, his farewell, as I knelt to kiss his ring, was: "Well, God bless your mother's son." That was the blessing that overthrew the Castle power in Mallow: it was "my mother's son," and not the son's self, who brought all the golden spells of the future Chancellor to nought. I am afraid my heart was beating very wildly, somewhere far down about my boots, as the train rolled into the Mallow Station. But the sense of unutterable loneliness in the presence of hopeless odds was not to last one moment more. There was a crowd and a band at the railway station, and they raised a shout which left me no manner of doubt that the fight was over before it was well begun. It was one of those spontaneous outbursts of local pride and love before which all human calculations and interests go down; and I was myself the only member of my family who counted for absolutely

nothing in the result. "My mother's son" counted for most of all; but "my father's son" was only less potent with many a grateful follower of his advice; my elder brother, Jim, with his old Fenian daring and adventurous spirit, was the force that stirred the young men to their heart of hearts; the school friends of my sister gave me much of that friendship of the women, young and old, which bore down all temptations of the old electoral Adam in the men; even the fishing and hunting comrades of my young brother Dick played their part in the triumph, while the verdict that I was "a good son" was the only element personal to myself in a struggle which revolutionised the Parliamentary representation of Ireland.

Our progress through the town was to me as bewildering an experience as if the ground had opened and admitted me to fairyland. When we got to our own old poverty-stricken suburb of Ballydaheen, especially, the enthusiasm of old and young—above and beyond all, of the old women, and, in a shyer and still more delightful way, of their daughters—made it difficult for me to believe my eyes and ears. The most amazing thing of all was that in a borough where, as indeed in every other borough, electoral corruption was the established law, the first and last person who put in a petition for money was a poor old creature, probably a stranger to Mallow, who put forth her hand. I answered her in the comic phrase with which my

old friend M'Weeney would respond to a beggar, whose feelings he would immediately salve with a sixpence : " Begor, ma'am, if I saw a copper with you I'd snap it ! " The old lady was staggered, but the hand was promptly withdrawn, and the old face lighted up with fun ; and from that time forth no petition for money ever reached me. It was one of the legendary tricks of Mallow electioneering to engage all the attorneys at a fee of £105 apiece. My two conducting agents, Messrs. W. J. Fitzgerald and John Kepple, old schoolfellows and fast friends, did their work without a farthing's fee ; all others who had to do with the long battle on my side gave of their money as well as their energies without stint ; for even my hotel expenses I was presented with a blank account ;<sup>1</sup> and saving the sheriff's official expenses, which were paid out of the League funds, I am certain that a £5 note covered my whole personal bill of ways and means.

The crux came when I had to find words for my feelings. Our platform was a dangerously narrow and unprotected balcony over a shop at the corner of the street which now bears my name. When I stepped out on it and looked down upon the swarming scene of enthusiasm some fifteen feet beneath, my eyes swam, every word of my prepared oration

<sup>1</sup> Indeed, it was not alone during the Mallow Election, but during all the changeful twenty-three years that have elapsed since, my faithful old friend, Mr. John O'Mara of the Royal Hotel, could never be prevailed upon to accept a sixpence for the hospitalities of his open house.



fled from my memory, and I was near enough to signalising my first public appearance by tumbling head foremost over the unprotected balcony. I was saved by the enthusiasm of the crowd. They did nothing but cheer and cheer, and wanted nothing more. And their enthusiasm so caught me that I forgot everything, except to stutter out a few untutored sentences of thanks. Then all of a sudden the train of reasoning of my prepared speech came back to me, and the whole thing went through with immense success in the headlong, shouting, wildly gesticulating way which, I am sorry to say, from that evening to this became my appalling elocutionary manner. The field was already fought and won. An amazed country learned a few days afterwards that the poor Attorney-General was ordered to forgo his judgeship and freeze on to his seat for Mallow, in the hope that the local frenzy of the moment would have so far passed away as to make it possible for the Castle ass, laden with gold, to pass once more through the gates of Mallow.

In the meantime, our struggle was growing amain against the White Terror which was set up in Dublin Castle to exact vengeance for the Phoenix Park murders. While the White Terrorists' jury-packing and hangings were in their heyday, a spirit arose among their own Praetorian Guards which struck dismay even into the stoical soul of Earl Spencer. The Royal Irish Constabulary and the Dublin

Metropolitan Police, with the faithlessness from which even the most trusty instruments of tyranny are not free, improved the shining hour to press their own grievances home at the bayonet's point. The Land League spirit which they had so ruthlessly striven to put down seized upon themselves. They rose for higher pay, they held their indignation meetings in their own barracks, they bearded their officers, they threatened a universal strike, they even flourished their rifles. While the terror of the White Terrorists was at its height, Earl Spencer, addressing a band of somewhat knock-kneed special constables who were sworn in to take the place of the strikers, used these remarkable words: "The police were, I believe, led away by designing men. Some were in the force, and some were, perhaps, outside the force." How far some hint of what I am about to relate may have reached the Viceroy when he made his allusion to "designing men outside the force," I know not. I am quite sure the Tadpoles who would have the affairs of nations conducted with the cautious nods and winks of the Whips' room will raise their hands in horror at my indiscretion in revealing, even at this distance of time, events so well calculated to shock the English imagination as to the possibilities of Irish discontent. This book, however, like all other books about Ireland, will have been written in vain if it does not teach the elementary truth that, while all true representatives of Ireland have ever honestly pined for

some good understanding between the peoples of these two islands, and may ever be trusted to be true to their bond, they are none the less ready to go all lengths within the compass of honour to bring it home to the English mind that, failing some such good understanding, it is those who are most moderate in the desire for peace who will least hesitate to make Irish discontent audible, and even terrible. And at this particular moment reason had as little chance of a hearing among the jury-packers and hangmen and half-crazy Indian officers who had got the upper hand in Dublin as poor Monseigneur d'Affre had when he lifted up the Cross on the Paris barricade.

The Metropolitan Police having held their mass meeting in disobedience to express orders from the Castle, two hundred and fifty of them were dismissed, and the rest of the Force—a thousand men of the finest physique in Europe—instantly threw off their uniforms, marched out on strike, and wired their colleagues of the Royal Irish Constabulary north, south, east, and west, that they were ready for all eventualities. As I sat winding up the week's commercial work in the office of *United Ireland*, word reached me that a deputation from the revolted constables was below and desired an interview. It is one of the quaintest experiences of my career that, although I have been more fiercely engaged than perhaps any other man of our time in life-and-death struggles with the higher police officers, and in innumerable physical collisions with bands of armed



policemen themselves, I have never received a blow, and scarcely an unkind word, from any policeman in the ranks, but have, on the contrary, experienced a secret thrill of sympathy on their part, even in the midst of the wildest tumult,—of which Englishmen would do well to take count. The deputation came to inform me that the malcontents were to hold an indignation meeting in the evening, and to invite me to address them! I told them I would give my answer later, and dismissed them.

Then and there flashed upon my brain a project which, doubtless, most people will hold to be an insane one, and which, perhaps, most others will hold it to be still more insane to reveal. The Irish people are the worst of conspirators and the most irresistible in the heat of a battle charge. All armed movements in Ireland have ever failed through being sicklied over with time for open-mouthedness and defeat in detail. Briefly, my notion was, without disclosing my plan to anybody (except one to be presently mentioned), to go to the police mass meeting, to raise to the highest possible pitch the excitement with which they were boiling over, and straightway, under cover of a deputation to the Viceroy, to march my thousand constables through the streets to Dublin Castle, helping ourselves to revolvers in the gunshops on the way, and, having made a separate arrangement to seize upon the guard at the entrance to the Upper Castle Yard the moment they tried to close the gate, take possession

of the Viceroy and his Chief Secretary, convey them to a place of safe keeping whence they and we could negotiate, and in the meantime get possession of the wires and precipitate a revolt of the Royal Irish Constabulary throughout the country to strengthen us in the negotiations.

My one confidant in the matter was Parnell, against whose absolute veto there would be no proceeding further. He happened to be staying at Morrison's Hotel, and when I drove over I was greatly surprised to find he thought the project less hare-brained than I had anticipated. As he sat over a late breakfast, with a heap of unopened letters and newspapers beside him, he talked over the whole plan with the detachment with which he would examine a handful of alluvial gold from his own river at Avondale. The only glint of sentiment was the soft whisper: "The one thing that can be said with certainty is that you can't come out alive from it—or perhaps some more of us." Then he got harking back upon his old theory that Robert Emmet showed his sense by going straight for the Castle. "But," he said, "they will have time to shut the gate." I answered that the utter unexpectedness of the thing would be sure to catch the Castle people napping, but that an essential part of the project was to have at least fifty armed Fenians concealed in the neighbouring building of the Corporation, who would be in a position to make a rush for the gate, if necessary,

at a moment's warning. He lighted a cigarette and listened with bent head. "These men at the Castle are stupid enough for anything. Any new thing is sure to throw them out of gear." And he proceeded to discuss what might happen if we did succeed in rushing the Castle. As it would be by that time dark, the lamps would only have to be extinguished, and if a small number of determined men held the approaches to the Castle, the troops from the many scattered barracks would fall to firing at one another in the dark, and the situation would be, perhaps, saveable until morning, by which time it might be just possible for our prisoners and ourselves to be shipped to America. "If you could only win your Majuba Hill, we should probably have the old gentleman" (Gladstone) "ready enough to come to business," he said; "but can you?" Then, all of a sudden, he repelled the thoughts he had been more or less caressing. "You would probably carry your policemen with you right enough," he said; "they are mad with the novelty of the whole thing, and very likely with whiskey; but you will never get these little secret gangs to budge"; and he added some contemptuous reflections, holding that we had got in the public movement all that was left of Fenianism except the dregs. "However," he said, "go and see for yourself. I will remain in town for the night."

I was fortunate enough to secure for my intermediary with the secret societies a man of wide



influence and determined courage, who now occupies a high position in the life of Dublin. By the aid of his pass-key I was able to see the leaders of the two rival sections into which the Irish Republican Brotherhood had got divided. I explained so much of the scheme as was necessary to illustrate how indispensable a condition of success was the assistance of from fifty to a hundred trusty armed Nationalists to secretly direct and protect the march of the police mutineers. The answer of one of them was: "Yes, indeed, and get my men hurt!" and the answer of the second was the still queerer one: "You're not going to get me to give Parliamentary agitation an advertisement." When I returned to Morrison's Hotel, Parnell received the tidings with the gentle pooh of the lips and the ironic smile with which he could convey whole columns of comment on his reply: "I told you what these gentlemen were worth. I think I've got time to catch my train at Harcourt Street."

The police meeting that evening was given up; but the semi-insurrectionary state of Dublin for the next two or three days—what with the performances of the "special constables," half of them ridiculously fat Sunday citizens and the other half-tipsy rowdies, tearing madly through the streets, the crowds pouring in upon them, stoning them, sending them flying, and in one case going within an inch of lynching one of them who had run amuck with his revolver, and finally the wild charges of infantry and hussars

in every direction for the extrication of the special constables, while the whole country was seething with the excitement of the Royal Irish Constabulary waiting for the first signal of revolt—gave pretty conclusive proof that the dash upon the Castle on that first night of uncontrollable passion was not quite so hopeless an enterprise as now in cold blood it may appear. Even three days afterwards, when Canon Pope, a worthy Catholic loyalist of a rather eccentric type, addressed the revolted constables and besought them to surrender at discretion, his voice was drowned by an almost universal shout of "We prefer exile!" and when, a day or two later, they were summoned back to the Castle, it was to be told to resume their uniforms on practically their own terms.

The Green Street Bloody Assize was all the summer preparing its victims "by hook or crook" by means of its "loyal Protestant juries" and of informers subsidised by thousands of pounds apiece. As the autumn wore on, man after man mounted the scaffold protesting his innocence, and a horrible conviction overspread the country that we were witnessing a series of reckless, more or less haphazard assassinations in vengeance for the failure to lay hands on the murderers of Lord Frederick Cavendish. *United Ireland* could not long escape retaliation for the red-hot shot it poured in weekly upon the practitioners in the legal shambles in Green Street. The long-expected thunderbolt from

the Castle fell at last, when I was summoned to the dock in Green Street myself to answer a charge of "Criminal Libel." It was in reference to an article headed "Accusing Spirits" in the issue of December 23rd. It set out by a *résumé* of the dying declarations of seven of the men hanged or under sentence of execution, which, with my comments, ought perhaps to live as the record of what "law and order" meant in that *année terrible* in Ireland :—

### ACCUSING SPIRITS

"Of the fact, that since his condemnation and previous to Saturday last, he declared that he was innocent of the murder there is not the slightest doubt."—*Freeman*—Report of the Execution of FRANCIS HYNES.

"I am going now to my doom. Going before my Maker, I have to declare my innocence of the murder."—PATRICK WALSH, on the gallows, Sept. 22nd.

"I don't deserve it. There is no claim against me. The day will come when, sooner or later, you shall account for my innocent life."—MICHAEL WALSH, on being sentenced to death, Sept. 29th.

"He left it now to God and to the Virgin that he never left hand, or foot, or back, or anything else on that man, and he left it to the Court to do what they liked with him."—PATRICK HIGGINS (Long), on being sentenced to death, Dec. 13th.

"I am going before my God. I am as innocent as the child in the cradle."—MYLES JOYCE, on the gallows, Dec. 15th.

"On my oath, I never fired a shot at John Huddy, nor Joseph Huddy, nor any other man since the day I was born; yet Kerrigan and his family have sworn falsely."—THOMAS HIGGINS (Tom), on being sentenced to death, Dec. 16th.

"I can solemnly swear that I am as clear of that deed as any man who ever drew breath. This is a slaughtering-house. I am as glad to go to my God as to my home and family."—MICHAEL FLYNN, on being sentenced to death, Dec. 20th, 1882.

Two of these men spoke from the very gallows with the noose round their necks. They were unquestioning Catholics. One moment more, and, if the protestation on their lips were a lie, they knew they were stepping into an



eternity of torment. The world's opinion was to them a feather's weight. The rustle of the Unseen was falling mysteriously on their ears. Which are we to trust—the last words of man after man as he faces the All-Seeing Judge, or the verdicts of tribunals carefully concocted to “convict murderers by hook or crook”? There was an old-fashioned maxim of the books: “Better ninety-nine guilty ones should escape than that one innocent man should suffer.” The theory of the manipulators of the Crimes' Act seems to be that somebody must be hanged—the right person, if possible, but at all events somebody. Mistakes will occur; but out of any given half-dozen victims, though there may be one or two who do not deserve hanging, there will almost certainly be one or two who do. Better, in any case, that a garrulous peasant should be kicked into eternity by Mr. Marwood than that the detective police should acknowledge itself baffled, and cream-faced loyalists go about in terror of their lives. It is impossible to study the trials and scaffold-scenes of the past few months without putting this horrible construction upon them. If Hynes or Walsh or Joyce or Higgins had had the fair trial by their peers which has been the proud right of the meanest churl in England since the day of Runnymede, their dying protestations need not have troubled the rest of the public. We desire to avoid exaggerated language, for we recognise the gravity of the subject and of our responsibility; but our attachment to the elementary principles of justice impels us deliberately to say that, both as to the tribunal and as to the evidence, the proceedings against these men bear an indelible taint of foul play. Upon their trials the ordinary detective machinery—vigilance, resource, the ingenuity to discover scraps of evidence, the intelligence to piece them together—counted for little. Packed juries and bribed witnesses were the all-sufficient implements of justice. Anybody can govern with a state of siege, or win with loaded dice, or hang with unobstructed hanging machinery. When

the art of trying a man consists in picking out of the panel twelve of his deadly enemies, and the production of evidence means chiefly the getting at the worst side of the veriest villain in the community and humbly consulting his prepossessions as to the reward and the little precautions necessary to make the bed of the informer a bed of velvet, verdicts of guilty and hangings may be had in any desired quantity; but if this is moral government in the Victorian era, why cut Strafford's head off for tampering with Irish juries, or strike King James's crown away for influencing English ones, or hold Torquemada accursed because he did with hot pincers what the great and good Earl Spencer does with bags of gold? What is worst about the White Terror set up in Green Street is the ghastly pretence that it is all done to save the sacred right of trial by jury in Ireland; that it is necessary to pack juries that we may have juries at all; that it is better to convict upon paid swearing than to adopt drumhead ideas of evidence. Out upon the imposture! If the trials of the last few months are trials by jury, such as Englishmen bled to maintain, we solemnly declare that the sooner we have the tribunal of the Three Judges, or the rough-and-ready justice of the court-martials, the better for public decency and for the accused themselves. An Alexandria telegram of last Friday tells us that "nearly five hundred prisoners have been discharged for want of evidence." In Alexandria they have the advantage of martial law. We wonder if these five hundred had been tried by packed juries of Levantine shopkeepers, and sums of five thousand pounds dangled before every needy wretch that could coin obliging evidence, how many of the five hundred would have escaped the rope and the boot of the Egyptian Mr. Marwood? Again we say, the dying declarations prefixed to this article may be all false; but they may be also some of them or all of them true; and the scandal—a scandal which would throw England into a blaze if the victims were Sydneys or Russells, and

not mere Gaelic-speaking mountaineers—is that there was nothing in the mode of trial to satisfy the public conscience that murder may not have been avenged by murder.

The police officers who brought the warrant against me for this “false, malicious, and seditious libel,” killed two birds with one stone by seizing the current issue of *United Ireland*—as usual, after nine-tenths of it had been safely disseminated through the country. To make the action of the Castle the more hateful in its dramatic insincerity, upon the very day on which I appeared at the Police Court, as the preliminary to a long term of imprisonment, Attorney-General Johnson hied away to Mallow, on his long-deferred farewell visit, and the following morning we read :

The Attorney-General arrived in Mallow to-day and announced his election to the Bench. Mr. John Naish, Q.C., Law Adviser to the Castle, is the Government candidate for the borough.

So the Castle had “sounded the trumpet at Bethsacarem” at last! I responded the following morning with an address to the people of Mallow, which for brevity, at all events, beats the record :

Men of Mallow—From the steps of the Judicial Bench the Castle Attorney-General offers you a candidate. From the threshold of a prison I offer you another. From Green Street, I appeal to Mallow.

The prosecution at the Police Court was to open on Monday. I profited by the interval to



journey down to Mallow by Saturday's night mail-train with Mr. Healy and Mr. Sexton. The air was glistening with the shower of Castle gold scattered by a troop of Castle attorneys; but the people's golden hearts proved to be of nobler metal. Messrs. Healy and Sexton, then in the full blossom of their superb powers and of their mutual amity, filled the veins of the people of Mallow with liquid fire by their impassioned eloquence and glittering sarcasms; and when we were obliged to depart by the night mail for the morning's prosecution in the Police Court, they illuminated every minute of the long night journey with flashes of repartee and brave young wit that even now, after the lapse of two-and-twenty years, makes the whole air bright around me when I recall it, as it did while I lay in a corner of the compartment that night smarting with the agony of a painful illness. Even in the cab from Kingsbridge, and as we parted on O'Connell Bridge in the biting air of the winter morning, they cut and thrust and answered back until the Dublin gas-lamps seemed to flash like constellations. Alas and alas for our poor human infirmities! when shall we three so meet again?

We parted about six o'clock in the morning. At ten I was in the Police Court listening to the catalogue of my high crimes in objecting to hangings, as to five of which The MacDermot, subsequently Attorney-General, afterwards admitted to me the wrong men had been hanged. Mr.

A. M. Sullivan, who had retired from Parliament and was already winning laurels at the English Bar, came over specially to defend me in a speech of noble constitutional force ; but his speech might, of course, have been as well delivered to a deaf mute as to the Police Magistrate. I was committed for trial in the same court at Green Street where the shambles had been set up, and was destined to experience in my own person the process of empanelling a packed Protestant jury in a city five-sixths Catholic ; destined also, I am glad to say, to owe my escape from two years' imprisonment to one of those sound Protestant jurors who was well and truly packed to convict me "by hook or crook." But the Mallow trial was to come off before the Green Street one, and all the country felt that there would be delivered the verdict that would really decide my fate and the fate of much besides.

The Government made a supreme effort to crush whatever was still possible of free and advised speaking by prosecuting Messrs. Healy, Harrington, Biggar, Davitt, and others for spoken words, while for the printed word they were raiding *United Ireland* office and sharking up my packed jury. They were preparing a still more frightful blow by putting in the dock at last the members of the Invincible Conspiracy, and, by one of the foulest wrongs in history, affecting to confound with their crimes our own last stand for public liberty. While the Mallow election was going forward, the secret

story of the murderous conspiracy that had for more than twelve months held official Dublin in impotent horror was being unfolded at the Police Office by means of a secret instruction under the Star Chamber clause of the Coercion Act, with the consequent crop of informers. This band of twenty-eight men all told had baffled all previous attempts to penetrate the mystery of their terrible organisation. After lying low for many months in terror of the public reprobation aroused by the Phoenix Park murders, the Invincibles soon found their own awful methods paralleled by the judicial crimes going on in Green Street. They stalked out of their lairs and established a counter-reign of terror as appalling as that under which the hangman kicked Myles Joyce's body through the trap-door while he was in his pathetic Gaelic declaring the innocence which nobody now doubts. The Viceroy, the Chief Secretary, the Judges, the chief officers of law and police, went about under escort in hourly peril of their lives. One day an Invincible was captured barely in time to prevent the dagger raised to strike at Judge Lawson in one of the principal streets of Dublin from doing its work. Another day, in another of the principal streets, one of the unfortunate "loyal Protestant jurors empanelled to convict murderers by hook or crook" was set upon with knives and left bathing in his blood. The Castle fell into such a state of desperation that a battalion of Marines was actually brought over and



in civilian clothing commissioned to walk about the streets with no other business than to afford protection against the blows of the twenty-eight mysterious terrorists. It was the usual action and reaction of police tyranny and secret terrorism which in any other country in the world Englishmen have no difficulty in understanding.<sup>1</sup> But in Ireland it became the atrocious game of our official adversaries to blacken us with the crimes of the secret conspiracies they had themselves brought into being. Even a Chief Secretary who was himself one of the most lovable of human beings, whose writings and whose life were ennobled with the purest principles of public liberty, and who, when he came over to Ireland, repelled with indignation the attempts of the Irish landlord faction to fasten upon *United Ireland* the responsibility for the Phoenix Park murders, was so far changed by the mephitic atmosphere of Dublin Castle as to proclaim now that the articles in *United Ireland* were "as truly a part of the instruments of assassination as the dagger and the mask."

It was against such a combination of influences, calumnies, and terrors that I was put on trial for

<sup>1</sup> On July 12th, 1905, the *Times*, commenting on the news that Count Schouvaloff, Prefect of Moscow, while receiving petitions, was fired at three times by one of the pretended petitioners and fell dead, contented itself with remarking: "From Moscow we hear of the assassination of Count Schouvaloff, who as Prefect wielded practically absolute power both executive and administrative. His death appears to arouse neither surprise nor regret. It is regarded merely as an example of the only reprisals that a police-ridden people can make upon their oppressors."

my political life before the narrow tribunal of the Mallow electorate. To everybody outside Mallow it seemed a forlorn hope. The Castle candidate—a dull but erudite Catholic lawyer—was not, indeed, able to open his lips in public throughout the contest. Mr. Naish's silence was, however, so slight an advantage for us, that I once jocosely threatened I would get him a hearing if he continued to confine himself to the golden whisperings of his attorneys. This secrecy and these whisperings proved, however, so effective that to the last hour the Whig and Tory papers were cocksure the result of the ballot would be a crushing surprise for us. Our one hope was in the unbought devotion of the men, and especially of the women, of Mallow. Mr. Healy, Mr. Sexton, Mr. Harrington, and Mr. T. P. O'Connor threw themselves into the fight with an enthusiasm scarcely less frantic than that of the people of Mallow themselves. Our days were days of endless canvassing, speech-making, and countermining of the Castle agents of corruption, and our nights were little banquets of the gods, composed, in Father Prout's phrase, of "Irish potatoes flavoured with Attic salt."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> One of our allies from Cork City was an old Fenian leader of the name of Dominick O'Mahoney, who had escaped penal servitude by some miracle—possibly because even a sternly packed jury could not resist the influence of his sweetly dreamy temperament and poetical natural eloquence—but escaped only to witness the ruin of a flourishing business and to give way to the one weakness of his fine nature. One evening after our meeting Mr. T. P. O'Connor was rallying Dominick in his own genial way upon the comic side of

Upon the morning of the polling, one hundred voters (being a majority of the electorate) walked with us, two and two, to the Court-house, under the eye of their wives and mothers. But the Castle agents winked, and bade us await what the ballot papers would tell us as to what our hundred stalwarts would really do in the secrecy of "the confessional," which was the popular name for the polling compartment. I had not the slightest misgiving myself, but the excitement, the suspense and doubt, would go on growing until in the evening began the scrutiny of the votes. Not only had the hundred been as good as their word. The figures were :

|                   |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| O'BRIEN . . . . . | 161 |
| NAISH . . . . .   | 89  |

which was, for Mallow, a majority more stupefying than one of thousands would be in a modern London constituency. The scene in the Court-house when the numbers were declared was the most extraordinary scene of universal delirium I ever witnessed. Even a man so self-restrained in common life as Mr. Sexton sprang into the air like one possessed. I was, I think, myself the most collected, if not the

the Fenian rising, when all of a sudden Dominick rose up in his offended majesty, and, with face suffused by the grand Keltic spiritualism which glorified his poor old clothes and even his excitement of another order, launched these withering words : "Sir, you are a mere member of the Saxon Parliament. I would have you to remember you are talking to a member of the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic!" And with a pontifical wave of the hand he swept the mere Member of Parliament into bottomless insignificance.



only collected person in the town that night—as in all moments of passion or danger I have a singular knack of being—but when I thought of the result at all, it was with a feeling of stupefaction that made me pine to hide myself somewhere—since I could not cry. My action was, however, promptly decided for me by a giant named Dick Lombard—still surviving, I rejoice to say, as one of the most thriving merchants of the town—who caught me in his arms as he might catch a baby, hoisted me on his enormous shoulders, and ran with me through the town to our committee room, as if he and every man, woman, and child of the crowd who were surging around us had gone stark mad. I stood before the crowd for fully half an hour before I could get in a word, and indeed I don't believe there were half-a-dozen present who heard a single sentence, or cared.

It was late in the night before the old custom of "chairing" the successful candidate through the town was over. On the step of the waggonette where the members of Parliament sat, there clung on a young fellow who bore the dusky complexion of an Eastern mother, and had deep, almond-shaped eyes as oriental as a poem of Omar Khayyám, but rejoiced in the unoriental patronymic of M'Carthy, and spoke with the rich, melodious accent of Chapel Lane. As we were crossing the bridge we heard the shout, at sight of the illuminated houses and bonfires: "Oh, boys, the whole town is on fire!"

M'Carthy's oriental eyes lit up. "Yerra, man, they're illuminating up in heaven to-night," he cried. "Look!" and he pointed up to where the firmament was all gleaming with stars. And my thoughts turned not upon the political results of the Mallow election, which had broken for ever the electoral power of Dublin Castle in the Irish boroughs, but upon a quiet corner in the graveyard yonder, and upon another peaceful corner in distant Glasnevin.

These lines are written two-and-twenty years after, once more by the banks of the Blackwater, and in the midst of the survivors—sadly thinned and grey, alas!—of those who participated in the delirium of that night. It is a reflection which fills me with more humble thanksgiving than any which the rewards of princes or empires could inspire, that, after all the cruel vicissitudes of a revolutionary war of nearly a quarter of a century—after all the injustices and infidelities which are the common fate of Man, and especially of Political Man—I find myself still surrounded with the same trust and love and clinging tenderness in my native town as on the first wild night when I was Member for Mallow.

ROCKFOREST, MALLOW,

*July 14th, 1905.*





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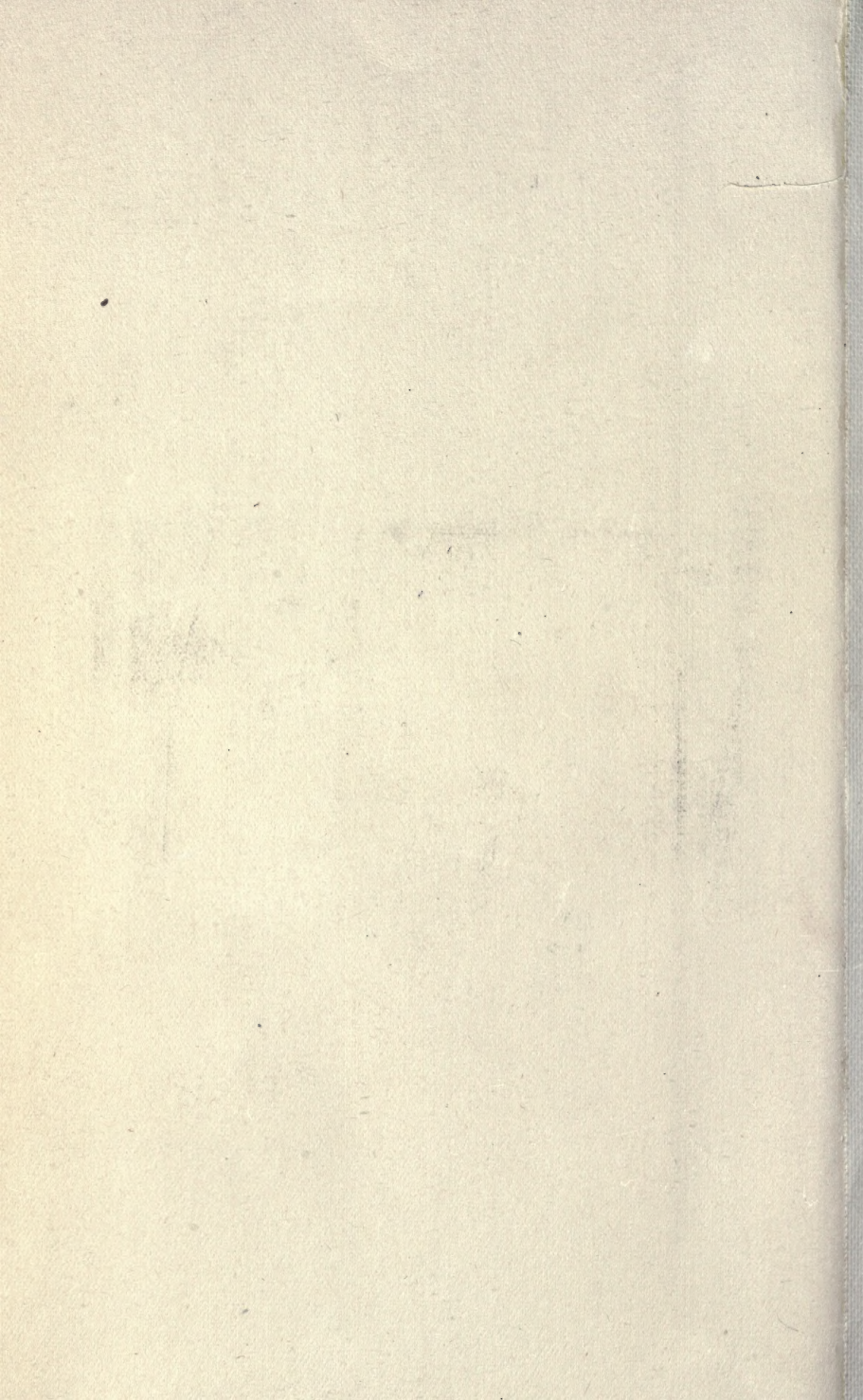
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